PROTESTANT MODERNISM IN HOLLAND

E. C. VANDERLAAN

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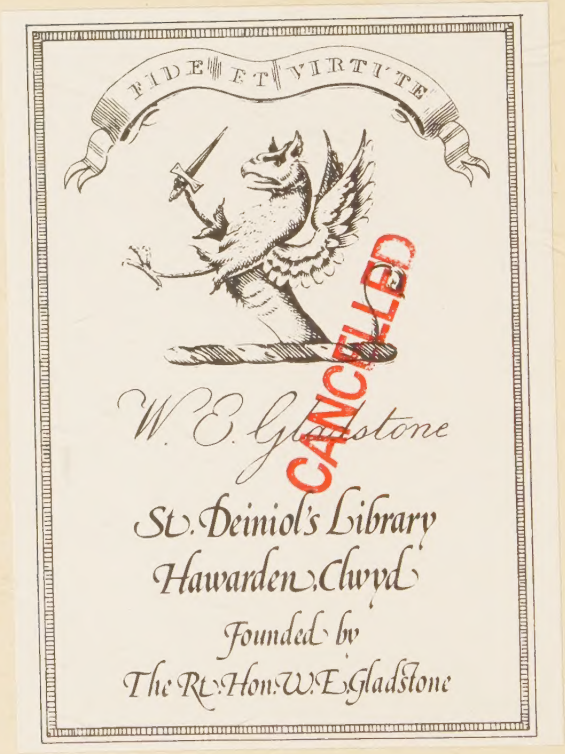
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PROTESTANT MODERNISM IN HOLLAND

BY

ELDRED C. VANDERLAAN, S.T.M.

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TO MY WIFE

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PREFACE

THIS book was accepted by the faculty of the Union Theological Seminary, New York, as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Theology. Contrary to the usual procedure, it was found more convenient to publish the book before completing the other requirements for the degree. Thanks are hereby given to the committee who approved the manuscript; to President Arthur Cushman McGiffert of the Union Theological Seminary for indispensable preliminary orientation through his lectures on the History of Christian Thought; to Professor F. J. Foakes Jackson and especially to Professor W. W. Rockwell, of that institution, for valuable suggestions for the preparation of the book; and to Professor K. H. Roessingh and other friends in Leiden, for information as to present religious conditions in Holland and for much personal kindness during my stay there.

ELDRED C. VANDERLAAN

MARBURG, GERMANY,
February 25, 1924

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INTRODUCTION

It so happens that at the time of the appearance of this book 'modernism' is the subject of heated controversy in Protestant circles in America. A year or two before, the same 'modernism' was under discussion in the Church of England. But this American and English liberal theology is in most instances mild and cautious as compared with the 'modern' school which appeared in Holland in the middle of the nineteenth century. As an attempt to present Christianity in a form in harmony with the modern view of the world, it bore a general resemblance to the whole movement of liberal Protestantism; but its closest parallel is found in present-day English and American Unitarianism.

It is not the scholarship of the Dutch 'moderns' of which we shall here treat. This is already well known to the theological world. The names of Kuenen, van Manen, and Tiele are famous; only less so are other names in the fields of Biblical criticism, philosophy of religion, and church history—Oort, Eerdmans, Scholten, Loman, van Loon, Rauwenhoff, Acquoy, Pijper, &c. What we have here to describe is not so familiar, viz. the bold and interesting theology which supported and encouraged this scholarship, and was in turn supported by it. This is not the only instance in which historical

and critical theories and theological views have been thus mutually dependent. Strauss and the Tübingen school avowedly proceeded from Hegelian principles. Even when criticism has supposed itself free from prepossessions, it has proceeded from some tacit assumptions. So too the modern study of the history of religion not only furnishes data for a theory of religion, but must start out from some theory. That is to say, Biblical criticism cannot well proceed until the theory of strict inspiration is at least tacitly laid aside; nor can a fruitful comparative study of religions be made without at least tentatively abandoning the antithesis of the one true religion versus the false, of the one revealed versus the merely human religions. But very often the assumptions underlying such studies have not been acknowledged in advance. Old doctrines of revelation and inspiration have been quietly filled with a different content. In Holland, on the other hand, the new point of view was declared with complete, not to say brutal, explicitness. 'No miracle, no special revelation' was the declaration; and Kuenen in his *Religion of Israel* states at the outset: 'Of those religions [the great religions of the world] the Israelitish is to us one, nothing less, but also nothing more.'[1]

The *moderne richting*, then, is that school of Dutch liberal Protestantism which definitely undertook to

[1] A. Kuenen, *De godsdienst van Israel tot den ondergang van den Joodschen staat.* 2 *deelen.* (Haarlem, 1869, 1870), vol. i, p. 5.

present a form of Christianity in harmony with 'the modern view of the world'. What that 'modern view' is, need not be explained at length. Copernicus had overturned the setting of the ancient drama of God and man. Natural science had brought to view a connected, invariable system of natural law, in which miracle-stories became harder and harder to credit. The new historical sense and the wider acquaintance with many religions made it increasingly difficult to maintain the single supernatural validity of the one religion as against all the others. With Lessing's Nathan,[1] men could more easily believe that God had given to each of His sons a true gold ring. And, finally, since the Renaissance there had come a renewed sense of the worth of man and of the present world. So in the course of several centuries, a natural world began to replace a supernatural, and the autonomy of the reason and conscience to assert itself against external religious authority.

But in Holland this modern intellectual situation appeared late. For a hundred years, while in Germany the successive waves of the *Aufklärung*, the idealistic philosophy, and the revulsion to scientific realism followed each other, in the Dutch theological world the ground was held by a mild, muddled liberalism, neither

[1] The reference is to the attractive figure of the Jew in Lessing's drama *Nathan der Weise*.

loyal to the old orthodoxy, nor having any understanding of the new thought that was abroad in the world. It was about 1840 that Holland awoke. Then began an eager study of the great German philosophers, of the German critics, often with misunderstanding, and often with indignant repudiation of this new 'unbelief'. When presently Holland too had its 'modernism', it was a modernism composed of belated and imperfectly assimilated doses of Schleiermacher, Hegel, Lessing, and Herder, plus an overwhelming influence from the contemporary scientific realism.

It is easy at this date to say that the Dutch modernists were shallow in their philosophy and hasty in assuming that the crude 'modern view of the world' which they received was the final truth. But there is in these men an admirable courage and a refreshing honesty. There is no indulgence in that irritating habit of liberal theologians—'reinterpretation' of old doctrines.[1] What they disbelieved, they explicitly denied.

The members of the 'modern' school were not confined to any single ecclesiastical body. Most of them belonged to the great national Reformed Church, but Loman, for instance, was a Lutheran, Hoekstra a Mennonite, and Tiele a Remonstrant. The career of modernism in the life of the churches is described in Chapter IV.

[1] In the earlier writings of Scholten we do find such a use of traditional terminology with a new signification.

CHAPTER I

THE PREPARATION

1. *The Situation at the Opening of the Nineteenth Century.*

As a background to all theological movements of the schools, there has always persisted among the Dutch Protestant laity, especially in the rural parishes, a severe Calvinism of the type of the Synod of Dort. But in the foreground at the beginning of the nineteenth century stood an old and a new theological liberalism, and a small but important pietistic group. Into the field occupied by these various schools came the modernists; their beginnings and their career are in part explained by the situation into which they entered. We must therefore briefly sketch in order 'old liberalism', the Groningen school, and the *réveil*.

'Old liberalism', the current theology of the schools about 1800, was a rationalistic supernaturalism surviving from the eighteenth century. True to its heritage, it thought of Christianity as a body of truths supernaturally revealed. The fact of revelation was based upon the trustworthiness of the writers of Scripture, and harmonistic interpretation served to make the Bible self-

consistent. In contrast to ecclesiastical dogma, this theology was fond of calling itself 'Biblical'. And this amounted in fact to a general watering down of traditional doctrine. The Trinity, the two natures of Christ, the satisfaction-theory of the death of Christ, Calvinistic predestination, eternal condemnation, and the like were often found unpalatable, and rejected as un-Biblical.

The great movements of thought in Germany were not unknown, but produced little effect. As all non-believers in a special revelation were placed outside the ranks of Christianity, the works of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling were simply laid to one side.[1] Schleiermacher became known just after 1830; but a few years later the leading theological journal of the day, the *Godgeleerde Bijdragen*, greeted a translation from Schleiermacher in these words: 'We consider it beneath the office of a Protestant teacher to translate such writings and to publish them without corrective annotations.'[2] Strauss's *Leben Jesu* roused a storm, as it did in Germany, and led to a fresh study of the gospel records; but many, secure in their 'Biblical supernaturalism', thought the excitement over such works unnecessary.[3] For a time, therefore, Dutch theology remained undisturbed from without.

The Groningen school belongs under the head of medi-

[1] K. H. Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland; hare voorbereiding en eerste periode* (Dissertation, Groningen, 1914), pp. 22–4.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 24–5.

ating theology. Here, for the first time, we find a real influence from Schleiermacher, Lessing, and Herder, and also from the first leaders of the German *Vermittlungstheologie*. In the years 1829–30 three pupils of the philosopher van Heusde of Utrecht became professors of theology at Groningen. Van Heusde had conceived of history as a process of education of the human race towards the ideal of 'humanity'.[4] His three disciples at Groningen, Pareau, van Oordt,[5] and P. Hofstede de Groot, began publishing in 1837 a periodical, *Waarheid in Liefde* (Truth in Love). For many decades their views were developed in the meetings of a little group of professors and pastors.[6]

The Groningen school made a new approach to religion. To the old liberalism, faith was assent to a system of doctrines taught by Christ (with a right attitude of heart as a necessary adjunct). But the Groningen school thought of faith as a trustful self-giving to Christ and God. It issues from the experience of God's love. Hofstede de Groot gives credit for this insight to Schleiermacher, but expands Schleiermacher's 'feeling of dependence' into *sensus dependentiae, sensus indigentiae, sensus amoris*.[7] On this view of faith, revelation is no longer the imparting of beliefs by Jesus, as with the old

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[5] Succeeded soon by W. Muurling. J. Herderschee, *De moderne godsdienstige richting in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1904), p. 57.

[6] Roessingh, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 30.

liberalism, nor a set of doctrines about Jesus, as with orthodoxy, but consists of Jesus Christ himself, 'his mission, his person, his history'.[8] Christ came to make us over by his personal influence, to make humanity ever more conformed to the likeness of God. This, and not a satisfaction of the Divine justice, is the work of Christ.[9]

But the Groningen theology is not consistently built upon these fundamental principles. Much is taken over from the Bible that does not properly belong to the system. The Groningen Christology is put together out of various Scripture texts that appealed to these men. Thus, the pre-existence is taught, but not a Logos-doctrine, nor the Trinity. Christ's moral perfection is attributed to moral victories won in his pre-mundane life![10] Christianity is declared to be the truest and most excellent stage of human religion, but it is not the exclusively true religion.[11]

We have here, then, a theology warmly pious, frankly heterodox, but thoroughly supernaturalistic. Owing to this combination of qualities, the Groningers (after 1867 known as the Evangelicals)[12] sided with the modernists in ecclesiastical politics, as fellow-sufferers under the heavy yoke of orthodoxy; but in theological controversy they bitterly opposed the modernists as deniers of the supernatural.

[8] Roessingh, *op. cit.*, p. 37, quoted from van Oordt.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 39.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 38.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 36.
[12] *De Hervorming*, 1908, No. 22. p. 174.

Contemporary with the rise of the Groningen school, but of quite another stamp, was the Awakening, always called in Holland after the parent movement in Switzerland, the *réveil*. Among its adherents were the poet Bilderdijk, the converted Jew Izaak da Costa (also a writer), and the statesman Groen van Prinsterer. This movement was practically confined to a few aristocratic circles in Amsterdam and the Hague, who held pietistic meetings in their homes. After 1854 these meetings ceased.[13] The *réveil* was a reawakening of the sin-and-grace type of religion. Man's depravity and hopeless condition, the wondrous escape provided by the Atonement, God's free and sovereign grace—these were the ideas which lived afresh among these pietists. In controversy with the Groningers, emphasis came to be laid upon the infallibility of Scripture, the true deity of Christ, and reconciliation through the blood of the cross. Their religion was, to be sure, really based upon feeling—experience. But the Bible in their experience acted as a means of grace, and so it was natural to insist upon the absolute, infallible, decisive authority of Scripture. Gaussen's *Sur la Théopneustie*, written in 1840, was widely read in these circles.[14] Furthermore, they found congenial material in the doctrinal formulae of the Reformed Church, and came, with exceptions, to regard them as a complete expression of Christian truth.

[13] Roessingh, *op. cit.*, p. 45, note 1.

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 53, 54.

Hence in church politics they fought for strict enforcement of conformity. But some of their leaders were lax in regard to the doctrine of predestination, thereby laying themselves open to the attack of Scholten (*vide infra*).

'Old liberalism', Groningen school, and *réveil* all played some part in the origin of the 'modern' school. To the prelude of this we now turn.

2. *The Immediate Preparation for the 'Modern' Theology.*

Meanwhile in the world at large there had appeared, and had now existed for some time, the phenomenon known as the 'modern view of the world', and the modern man who held it. Dutch 'old liberalism', content with its eighteenth-century heritage of enlightenment, resolutely refused to go on to the modern revolutionary points of view. The Groningers did indeed go part way with the newer ideas, but were too much concerned for the religious life of the Christian community, and too busy with practical labours, to enter whole-heartedly into a drastic revision of theology. The men of the *réveil* understood better what was involved, and fought the new world-view as the arch-enemy. But presently appeared a group of young men who had read the great Germans to more purpose, and while not at once yielding to the new views, were feeling their way toward

new principles. In controversy with each other, their ideas developed and changed. Opponents drew together and allies parted company. The chief names in this group are the young theologians Scholten, van Oosterzee, and Doedes, and the philosopher Opzoomer.

Cornelis Willem Opzoomer, 'the first modern man in Holland',[15] became professor of philosophy at Utrecht in 1846, at the age of twenty-five. At this stage of his career he was a follower of Krause. His inaugural oration (in which he made a departure by using Dutch instead of Latin) was entitled *De Wijsbegeerte den Mensch met Zichzelven Verzoenende* (Philosophy Reconciling Man with Himself). In Hegelian fashion, it showed man as passing through three religious phases, first naïve belief, then the denial of this, then the understanding, through philosophy, of the deeper meaning involved in it. In the same year Opzoomer set forth his own philosophy in the little work, *The Doctrine of God in Schelling, Hegel, and Krause; part i, Krause.*[16] Following Krause, he reasons from nature as the ground of all natural phenomena, and from the self as the ground of all personal phenomena, to the necessary thought of a Ground of all things. This Ground, or God, is not the first link in the

[15] K. H. Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland* (Haarlem, 1922), p. 6.

[16] C. W. Opzoomer, *De leer van God bij Schelling, Hegel, en Krause. Eene wijsgeerige proeve. Eerste stuk, Krause.* (Leiden, 1846.) Only this first part was ever published.

chain of the world, as in deism, but is Himself the whole chain. Yet this is not pantheism, Opzoomer says, for God is not identical with the world. God is like a body which exists only in its parts, yet is itself something more than their aggregate ; it is their unity.[17] This God must be self-conscious, else how could any finite being be self-conscious?[18] But the 'modern man' in Opzoomer appeared in the consequence which he drew from this doctrine of panentheism, viz. the denial of the supernatural:

> But with God, who does not stand over against nature, but to whom all nature belongs, who therefore is already in it, all coming to nature, all interposition in it, must disappear. [This as against Krause, who still had a place for special acts of God.] . . . It is readily to be understood that the same exactly must be applicable to special revelations and answers to prayer. . . . Prayer must be something quite different from egoistic solicitation.[19]

All this was a shock to Holland. Here was German unbelief for the first time invading Dutch soil. With the supernatural gone, the finality and absoluteness of Christianity was gone also. On this point Scholten

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 86 *et seq.* [18] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

[19] 'Maar bij God, die niet tegenover de natuur staat, maar tot wien de geheele natuur behoort, die alzoo reeds in haar is, moet alle komen tot de natuur, alle ingrijpen in haar, wegvallen. . . . Het laat zich gemakkelijk begrijpen, dat geheel hetzelfde op bijzondere openbaringen en gebedsverhooringen toepasselijk moet zijn. . . . Het gebed moet geheel iets anders zijn dan egoistische sollicitatie.' *Ibid.*, pp. 97, 99.

attacked him. To Opzoomer, Christianity was one of the individual forms of the general phenomenon, religion, and could not be set up against the others as final. It was 'perfectible'. Yet Opzoomer called himself a Christian, because he took the fundamental principle of Christianity to be 'the oneness of the Divine and the human'.[20] But Scholten would not admit that Opzoomer was a Christian.

From the question of the finality of Christianity, the debate shifted to that of how we know Christianity to be true. Both Scholten and van Oosterzee, in discussing this question, departed from external proofs, and based the truth of Christianity upon the satisfaction it gives for the needs of the heart. But Opzoomer stigmatized this as a *gevoelsleer* (feeling-doctrine), empirically insufficient, philosophically indefensible, and unworthy of religion and of Christianity, which includes reason and will as well as feeling. The question at issue, he says, is whether the Christian is *justified* in finding his satisfaction in this particular religion; and this cannot be proved by appealing to the satisfaction itself. On the contrary, we must have a theoretic, cognitive knowledge of God. We must reach God by thinking.[21]

The incisive criticism of Opzoomer drove his opponents asunder. On the one hand, van Oosterzee took refuge

[20] Roessingh, *Moderne theologie*, pp. 87–8.

[21] See a review by Opzoomer in *De Gids*, 1845, i, republished with additions as *De gevoelsleer van Dr. J. J. van Oosterzee beoordeeld* (Amsterdam, 1846).

in the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti* as a real supernatural agency; and both he and Doedes, his colleague in the theological faculty at Utrecht, went back more and more for their religious certainty to the argument from the trustworthiness of the New Testament writings. Scholten, on the other hand, while also appealing to the witness of the Holy Spirit, began to define it so as practically to yield the battle to Opzoomer. 'The witness of the Holy Spirit', he said, 'is no other than the witness of reason in the morally pure man'[22] ('in the morally pure man', because only such has the data from which to judge).

What is curious is, that once Opzoomer had driven him to this position, Scholten became henceforth the great insister upon the use of the reason in theology; whereas Opzoomer, soon abandoning Krause for an empirical philosophy, was compelled to adopt 'religious feeling' as one of the sources of knowledge. This gives the superficial (but inaccurate) appearance as if the two men had exchanged places.

[22] Roessingh, *Moderne theologie*, p. 93.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST PERIOD—'OLD MODERNISM'

1. *General Characterization.*

THE first period of Dutch modernism lasted for about twenty years—the fifties and sixties of the nineteenth century. It may be described as the period of the hegemony of Scholten and Opzoomer, the time when the movement was in the first flush of confidence, when it rejoiced in the possession of a definite theology, which was believed to be the successful harmonization of Christianity with the modern view of the world. The modern view meant, for these men, particularly the world-view of natural science, which was for them something final and undebatable. The system of unbroken natural law, the all-inclusive sway of the law of cause and effect, the consequent impossibility of believing in any event whose explanation might lie outside the system of finite causes, in a Divine interposition in the order of nature—this whole philosophy of science seemed to the first Dutch modernists the established, complete, and simple truth about the world. But how then was this modern picture of the world, which ad-

mitted of no doubt, to be reconciled with religious faith? By the simple method of *identification*. The system of natural causation is the activity of God, and other activity of God in this world there is none. The religious man expects nothing to happen save what science knows to be possible; but all that happens, while naturally caused, is at the same time willed by God, and that will of God is perfectly good. Religion thus accepts the verdict of science, but instead of developing this into an atheistic philosophy, arrives at a non-supernaturalistic, monistic theism. Along with this goes an optimistic, evolutionistic view of man, and the Christology of modern Unitarianism.

The main stream of this early modernism flowed from two sources, the monistic theology of Scholten and the peculiar empiricism of Opzoomer. These two men, long engaged in controversy and never feeling themselves in agreement,[1] none the less arrived by different routes at much the same position. Scholten approached this position from a theological determinism, gained by reflection upon the data of the world; coming only slowly to a consistent denial of miracles. Opzoomer, on

[1] Opzoomer's Krauseanism seemed to Scholten pantheistic. Later, when under the influence of Lessing, Herder, Schleiermacher, and Hegel, Scholten came to appreciate monism, Opzoomer had gone over to his scientific empiricism. Thus their views never met. Cf. J. H. Scholten, *Afscheidsrede bij het neerleggen van het hoogleeraarsambt aan de Universiteit te Leiden* (Leiden, 1881), pp. 27-8.

the basis of natural science, gave up miracles at the outset (as he had already done when following Krause), but for a short time held an indeterministic theory of the will. Opzoomer would never assent to Scholten's method of finding theism given in the facts of nature itself. For him, knowledge of God could not be derived from an observation of nature, but only through a special faculty. Yet howsoever these two men felt themselves in disagreement, their systems came to the same thing: the system of nature identical with the activity of a personal, self-conscious, holy God; evil a necessary but temporary element in the evolution of the world; no special, supernatural revelation; no breaks in the fixed order of nature; no answering of prayer, in the sense of granting of petitions; no real Christology.

But while the modernism of the first period bears the stamp of these two men, another theologian was developing a different approach to the problem of a modern theology. This was Hoekstra, of the Mennonite seminary in Amsterdam. Hoekstra came into his own a little later, when the spell of the great intellectualists had worn off somewhat. His method was that of the moral postulate, somewhat in the manner of Kant; and in virtue of his different approach, he was able to maintain a qualified indeterminism.

We pass to a more detailed discussion of the theology of these three men

2. *Scholten.*

In his *Commemoration of my Twenty-five Year Professorate* and his *Farewell Address* of sixteen years later[2] Scholten has given us an account of his theological development from first to last. In his years as a student at Utrecht, 1832–6, he was taught the old liberalism, or Biblical supernaturalism, with its mild heterodoxy and historical arguments. Already in these years the young Scholten found all this unsatisfactory. Christian faith was made dependent on a series of historical investigations. With Rousseau he thought, 'How many men between me and God', and 'I have never been able to believe that God bade me, under pain of hell, to be so learned'.[3] He missed, also, any unifying principle among the variety of separate things taught him. Such a principle he found for himself in the love of God revealed in Christ; this was the subject of his doctoral dissertation in 1836.[4]

In the next year appeared the periodical of the Groningen theologians, *Waarheid in Liefde*; and for a time, while a pastor, Scholten found in this theology what he desired. Its entire liberation from the external

[2] J. H. Scholten, *Herdenking mijner vijfentwintigjarige ambtsbediening* (Leiden, 1865); and the *Afscheidsrede*, cf. previous note.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[4] J. H. Scholten, *Disquisitio de Dei erga hominem amore* (Trajecti ad Rhenum, 1836).

authority of the Bible pleased him, as did its view of Christ as the ideal of humanity. But he soon decided that the Groningen Christology would not do, since its Christ, a pre-existent heavenly being, was not really human. He had himself presented this sort of Arian Christology in his dissertation on *The Love of God*; but he now decided that this was nothing but docetism. So it came about that when in 1840 he became professor of theology at the University of Franeker, he sounded a new note in his inaugural address on *The Duty of Avoiding Docetism*.[5]

This address is often regarded as the real beginning of the 'modern' theology in Holland. Both orthodoxy and the Groningen school, as presenting a Christ not truly human, are accused of docetism. In contrast, Scholten presents his own Christology, which is essentially that of Schleiermacher. Jesus is truly and only human, but is the type and ideal of humanity, and his work is to lead mankind, through love of him, into his own likeness. What Christ was, we can and ought to become.[6] In one sense Christ differs from us, namely

[5] J. H. Scholten, *Oratio de vitando in Jesu Christi historia interpretanda docetismo, nobili, ad rem Christianam promovendam hodiernae theologiae munere* (in *Annales Academici, 1839-40*, Hagae-Comitis, 1842).

[6] '. . . nobis vero simul perfectâ voluerit [Deus] humanitatis imagine monstrare quo modo ipsi, et debeamus, et possimus ad divinae naturae similitudinem escendere.' *Ibid.*, p. 265.

that what he is by his own nature, we can become only through him.[7] Curiously enough, Scholten still admits the miraculous birth and even the pre-existence, though they are simply taken over from the New Testament, and of the pre-existence Scholten makes nothing. It is a *mysterium*, not, as with the Groningers, an essential element in the system.[8] We have here, indeed, the first real expression of modernism; for although Scholten still bases his theology on the authority of the New Testament, and uses traditional terminology, and although years later he was still shocked at Opzoomer's radicalism, yet already in the Franeker address the heavenly Christ is gone, and the human Jesus of modernism has appeared.

The University of Franeker was in a state of decline. During the few years of Scholten's professorship there he had no theological students and could devote himself to study. Then the school was abolished, and after a brief period of anxiety Scholten was called to Leiden, where he remained to the end of his days.

While still a pastor, he had come into contact with

[7] '. . . ut quod ille *a se* sit, *naturâ suâ*, et vero *origine prorsus singulari*, id nos possimus et debeamus aliquando fieri; at vero non *a nobis*, non *proprio*, quod dicitur, *remigio*, sed unice per illum.' *Ibid.*, p. 273.

[8] Cf. *origine . . . singulari* in note 7. We can attain to all that Christ was '*unum praeexistentiae mysterium si excipias*'. *Ibid.*, p. 267. But his general view of Christ is this: 'Patet Christum

the high Calvinism of the rural laity; and had found himself in agreement with his parishioners on the point of predestination, though under the form of a philosophical determinism. Now, as professor at Leiden, he was led by two circumstances to develop this side of his thinking. The first circumstance was the publication, in the years 1844–7, of a work by the Swiss theologian Alexander Schweizer, *Die Glaubenslehre der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche.* This work Scholten began using with his students. The system of Schweizer[9] bears close resemblance to that of Scholten. The second circumstance which strengthened him in his determinism was the fact that some of the leaders of the *réveil* were attempting to induce the Government to enforce loyalty to the doctrinal symbols of the Reformed Church on the part of its ministers and teachers. But while these rigorists were orthodox in matters like the Trinity, the Atonement, the deity of Christ, &c., many of them fell short in what to Scholten was the heart of Reformed theology, viz. the doctrine of predestination. He determined, therefore, to do for his countrymen what Schweizer had done in German, to set forth the essence

origine sua coelesti praedicanda nil quidquam de se praedicasse, quod sit naturae humanae contrarium; hoc ipso enim quod homo erat perfectus coelestem originem probavit.' *Ibid.*, p. 99.

[9] For the theology of Schweizer, see O. Pfleiderer, *The development of theology since Kant, and its progress in Great Britain since 1825* (London, 1890), pp. 125–30.

of the Reformed theology in a modern form. The result was his great work, *The Doctrine of the Reformed Church, set forth and judged from the sources in its fundamental principles.*[10] The most striking feature of this work is Scholten's sincere belief that he is expounding the teaching of Jesus, Paul, and the great Reformed theologians, and his unawareness of the contrast with which his system stands out from all of them.

Scholten begins by distinguishing between Reformed principles and particular doctrines which have been held in the Reformed churches. There have been instances, he thinks, in which the doctrines contradicted the principles: e.g. the doctrine that sins are forgiven 'for Christ's sake', as if God were not the intender of our salvation, and the doctrine of reprobation, which makes God the author of an eternal cleavage between good and evil, in contradiction of the Reformed principle that God is the source of all good.[11] For the Calvinistic doctrine of the double decree, Scholten substitutes the doctrine of the ultimate salvation of all men. This instance is typical. In place of the traditional sense of the awfulness of sin, we have here nineteenth-century optimism;

[10] J. H. Scholten, *De leer der Hervormde Kerk, in hare grondbeginselen uit de bronnen voorgesteld en beoordeeld. Twee deelen* (Leiden, 1848, 1850; *2de druk*, 1850, 1851; *3de druk*, 1855; *4de druk*, 1861, 1862). References are to the first edition unless otherwise stated.

[11] *Ibid.*, i, pp. 18–20.

but because Calvinism is deterministic, and Scholten also is a determinist, therefore Scholten thinks himself a true Calvinist.

It is the Reformed principles, therefore, which Scholten is expounding. These are two: a formal principle, Holy Scripture the only source and touchstone of Christian truth;[12] and a material principle, God's absolute sovereignty and His free grace as the only ground of salvation.[13]

'Holy Scripture the only source and touchstone of Christian truth'—this might lead us to expect a theology based on external authority in the old way; but this is not what is meant. Out of the Scripture itself Scholten justifies the distinction between the Bible and the Word of God.[14] The Word of God, where this expression occurs in the Bible, means the truth, not the book. And further,

> the ground on which the Reformed Church acknowledges the Word of God in the Scripture as the expression of its faith, lies not in the witness of the Church, nor in that of Scripture itself; nor in historico-critical proofs of the genuineness and credibility of the books of the Bible; but in the witness of the Holy Spirit, i. e. in the agreement of what God has revealed through His messengers in the Scripture,

[12] 'De Heilige Schrift de eenige kenbron en toetssteen der Christelijke waarheid.' *Ibid.*, i, p. 59.

[13] 'Gods volstrekte heerschappij en Zijne vrije genade als de eenige grond der zaligheid.' *Ibid.*, ii, p. 1.

[14] *Ibid.*, i, p. 73 *et seq.*

> with what He still reveals by His Spirit in the reason and conscience of man. By virtue of this principle the Reformed Church rises above belief-on-authority, as well that found in the Roman Church, as that of later Protestant dogmatics and of Socinianism.[15]

And again,

> . . . Scripture is the touchstone for the Christian character of our religious conviction, but not for its truth, which latter has its ground in man himself and in the kinship of the human spirit with God. Otherwise expressed: Scripture, from an historical point of view, is the *rule*, but from the religious point of view, the *expression* of the Christian's faith.[16]

The faults of the church doctrine of the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti* are two: it was used to establish the Divine authority of the whole Bible; and it derived the witness of the Spirit from an immediate, supernatural activity of God. This latter is not necessary, for even sinful man remains naturally capable of recognizing the Divine, to which he is akin.[17] This is an important point. Man has a natural knowledge of God, the organ of which is the reason, and the source from which it is derived, nature, including the intellectual and moral world. This natural knowledge is hindered but not destroyed by sin.

It is in discussing this natural knowledge that Scholten indicates his argument for theism, thus: From the

[15] *Ibid.*, i, p. 86.
[16] *Ibid.*, i, pp. 150–2.
[17] *Ibid.*, i, p. 144.

existence and character of nature we are led to believe in a Cause, which as contrasted with nature, its effect, must be infinite, perfect, and self-existent; if infinite and perfect, then one, omnipresent, eternal, and almighty. From the order observed in nature we conclude that this Cause is understanding—a thinking Being, a Spirit. This is confirmed by the fact of human thought, seen unfolding itself in history. So, from the moral world, from man's striving toward a moral ideal, we conclude that God wills the good, is holy. From the unbreakable connexion between virtue and happiness, sin and misery, we see God as righteous. From the fact that the misery of sin leads to moral improvement, we learn to know God as a Father, who even in the punishment of sin shows Himself as forgiving.[18]

Here we find the real Scholten. This rational argument, from nature and man to God, is the heart of his system. It is, indeed, 'reason and conscience' which furnish his theology, and Scripture is only a confirmation, an expression of it. To an extraordinary degree Scholten was able to make Scripture 'agree' with him, and 'express' his faith. He could find texts to support every point. But that was a relic of tradition. Scholten was later to realize that his theology was not so Biblical as he had supposed. What we must notice here, is the complete confidence in the possibility of knowing God

[18] *Ibid.*, i, pp. 244–7.

from the phenomenal world. Scholten has no Kantian difficulties. He expressly repudiates Jacobi's theory of a special religious faculty, as also Schleiermacher's basing of religion on feeling. The witness of the Holy Spirit is *knowledge* (here follow many Scripture texts which speak of knowing God), and this knowledge is natural and mediate.[19] Anything like mystical, immediate knowledge of God, Scholten assumes is mere fanaticism.

The material principle of Reformed theology, we have seen, is God's sovereignty and free grace. With this principle, Scholten embarks on an interesting journey through the history of doctrine. Like a river, we see the doctrine of Divine sovereignty flow from the pure fountain, Jesus Christ, down the centuries, here befouled, there wandering and breaking into side-streams, now again cleared of accumulated silt, until at last it issues pure, the one clear stream among the many into which Christianity has divided, in the modernized Calvinism of Scholten. Or to change the figure, the chart of Christianity shows an ever denser tangle of lines, tracing the course of doctrine from its beginning, until it seems to lose all pattern or meaning. And now comes Scholten, marking more heavily one among these many lines, and lo! it is nearly straight, and all the rest are seen to branch off from it. Where it wavers a little, Scholten can indicate with a few dots where the true line

[19] *Ibid.*, i, p. 147 *et seq.*

should run; and this line, so traced, comes straight down from the founder of Christianity to its nineteenth-century exponent. A summary of the chapter headings of vol. ii shows this: The principle of God's sovereignty and free grace was uttered by Jesus Christ as the fundamental principle of religion; was developed by Paul in the strife with pagans and Jews; was defended by Augustine against Pelagius; was recovered by Protestantism from the Roman Church; on Protestant ground, was maintained against the denial of the Socinians; on Lutheran and Reformed ground, was kept free from the exaggeration of the Anabaptists and the idealism of the Mennonites; was more completely developed by the Reformed than by the Lutherans; and was defended by the Reformed Church against the objections of the Remonstrants. As far as Paul, the stream is pure, the line is straight. Thereafter, Scholten feels freer to point out inconsistencies and one-sidedness.

We shall not follow Scholten down the Christian centuries, since our interest is not in his interpretation of the New Testament, the Fathers, or the Reformers, but in his own theology; and in truth, what comes to light in the course of this historical exposition is mainly Scholten's own view. It is generally agreed among Dutch theologians that among Scholten's many and great gifts was not that of keen insight into the thought of other ages. We shall therefore gather the main

ideas out of the *Leer*, and present them more in a logical order.

The doctrine of God is controlling. We have seen how he arrives at his doctrine, by a method of 'reflection grounded upon observation'.[20] God, then, is absolutely sovereign. But His sovereignty is not mechanical and external. God is immanent in the creation, and in closest, living relation to man.[21] In the first edition of the *Leer*, Scholten holds that the Divine transcendence and immanence are the real meaning of the doctrine of the Trinity. But in the fourth edition he discriminates: 'The Church doctrine of the Logos has great, the doctrine of the Trinity no, speculative significance or value.'[22]

The absolute sovereignty of God involves, for the human will, determinism. But this determinism, once more, is not materialistic or mechanical, but psychological. Man has indeed a freedom which things and animals do not possess, in that he can choose, but his choices are not chance events, but are determined by his existing mental and moral condition. 'Ability or inability is . . . not the product of an arbitrary choice . . . but stands . . . in

[20] 'bespiegeling gegrond op waarneming.' *Op. cit.*, 4th ed., i, p. lxi.

[21] *Op. cit.*, 1st ed., ii, p. 132.

[22] *Op. cit.*, 4th ed., ii, p. 238. Scholten thinks the Church should never have tried to distinguish between the Logos and the Spirit.

closest connexion with man's moral *condition*.'[23] As long, for instance, as one has no desire to come to Christ, he cannot come. And what modifies man's moral condition are the influences under which he comes, which exert an attraction upon him. And these influences are due ultimately to God, who controls all things. God thus works on man dynamically, 'by the maintenance, awakening, and development of the rational and moral faculty which He as Creator has laid in our souls'.[24]

But if all events occur in accordance with the will of God, as Scholten maintains, then sin also must be part of God's plan. This he admits. Jesus believed and taught 'that sin, destined to destroy itself, is in its temporary working a handmaid of God for the attainment of His purpose, the triumph of the truth'.[25] Of those who object to this 'we ask in our turn whether then one can really suppose that sin and unbelief, where they exist, are not ordained by God, not taken up into His world-plan? "Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?"'[26] No other view is possible without denying the sovereignty of God.

[23] '. . . het *kunnen* of niet *kunnen* is . . . geen gewrocht eener willekeur . . . maar staat . . . in het naauwste verband met 's menschen zedelijke *toestand*.' *Op. cit.*, 1st ed., ii, p. 117.

[24] *Ibid.*, ii, p. 21.

[25] '. . . dat de zonde, bestemd om zich zelve te vernietigen, in hare tijdelijke werking eene dienaresse Gods is ter bereiking van Zijn doel, de zegepraal der waarheid.' *Ibid.*, ii, p. 13.

[26] 'Wij vragen toch op onze beurt, of men dan waarlijk meenen

'Destined to destroy itself', 'temporary working', 'triumph of the truth'—here is Scholten's answer to the charge of slandering the character of God. Sin, so long as it exists, is indeed part of the plan of God; but that plan is, that sin shall disappear, and all men be brought into filial relations with God. 'As the crust of ice, despite the power of the sun which shines upon it, remains hard for hours and days, but finally yields and melts away, so the human heart cannot permanently offer resistance to the truth and the all-conquering power of Divine love.'[27] Here Scholten, like Schweizer, feels that he is working out to a better conclusion the Calvinistic doctrine of the decrees. The Reformers, with the world-view current in their time, had no choice, but either to give up man's complete dependence on God for salvation, or else to accept what Calvin himself called the *decretum horribile*, the decree of reprobation.

> The idea that on the other side of the grave might come to pass what here on earth has not been accomplished by the redeeming power of Christ, at that time occurred to few, and ran the risk of being condemned as heresy. . . . The Reformed Church is called upon, building further on its thesis, that the final result of the development of the world must answer to God's eternal plan, to dispense with dualism,

kan, dat zonde en ongeloof, waar zij bestaan, niet door God geordend, niet opgenomen worden in Zijn wereldplan? "Zou er dan een kwaad in de stad zijn, dat de Heer niet doet?"' (Amos iii. 6). *Ibid.*, ii, pp. 358–9.

[27] *Ibid.*, ii, p. 25.

and so to remove the rightful complaint of the Lutheran Church against its particularism.[28]

> The true doctrine of Arminius, that the redemption and salvation of all is the aim and will of God, is brought into agreement with the not less true thesis of the Reformed Church, that God's will cannot be disappointed nor His council brought to naught, only when one ceases to limit the work of redemption to the present life, and on the contrary conceives of an outcome of the evolution of the world, in which good shall triumph over evil, and the aim of the moral creation, 'God all and in all', shall be completely attained.[29]

Working along the lines of determinism, Scholten became steadily more monistic. Thus at first he was puzzled by the fact of the sense of guilt, which seems to imply that the sinner could have done differently. In the first edition of the *Leer*, he says: 'It seems to us, therefore, that this problem has not yet been solved, and we gladly confess that the antinomy seems to us the more insoluble, the more deeply we think through the doctrine of sin.'[30] But in the third edition the sentence ends with the word 'solved', and in the fourth the sentence has disappeared.[31] Again, in the first edition Scholten says that the Christian may neither give up the Divine sovereignty, nor resolve moral evil

[28] *Ibid.*, ii, pp. 242–5. [29] *Op. cit.*, 2nd ed., ii, p. 330.
[30] *Op. cit.*, 1st ed., ii., p. 352, note.
[31] Roessingh, *Moderne theologie*, p. 143, note 2.

into a negation or a necessary moment in evolution.[32] But in direct contrast to this we read in the fourth edition: 'Sin is no positive principle, but the condition of the man still held in the shackles of the sensual life, who imagines that he can stand over against God, and cherishes the vain wish to isolate himself from God.' 'Sin, where it appears, stands in inseparable and necessary connexion with the gradually proceeding evolution of the human race out of the shackles of the sensual life to moral freedom and independence.'[33]

To Christ Scholten at this time still attached great importance. His view is brought out in discussing the Lutheran and Reformed Christologies. In the former he sees a revived Eutycheanism (the absorption of Christ's human nature into the Divine), and in the latter a tendency to Nestorianism (placing the two natures side by side, so as to make Christ in effect a double personality). Out of this dilemma Scholten finds a way by a better understanding of the immanence of God. Jesus is the unique, perfect instance of the Divine-human life, the prototype of that Divine-human life into which the race is to grow through his influence.[34] The old terminology is used; Scholten clears himself of each and all of the ancient heresies; and yet what he means by the orthodox language is simply that Jesus is perfect

[32] Scholten, *op. cit.*, ii, pp. 361–2.
[33] *Op. cit.*, 4th ed., i, p. lxvi.
[34] *Op. cit.*, 1st ed., ii, p. 235.

man, not different in nature from all others. As the typical human son of God, Jesus acts also as Mediator, Redeemer, and Saviour. So far, it is Schleiermacher's Christology.

Before 1860, Scholten still rejected the Tübingen criticism of the New Testament, and therefore used the Fourth Gospel as an historical source. So also for many years he continued to believe in the miracles of Jesus, although in a monism like his there was no real place for them. Strauss and the Tübingers, he holds, arrived at their radical conclusions because they had ceased to regard Christianity as the highest form of religion. The *Christian* theologian can never, in the exercise of free criticism, come to their denials. The gospel history, and with it the miracles, death, and resurrection of Christ, stand fast.[35] Yet he does not base Christianity on these, as we have already seen. He is convinced that

> Christianity as a religion would continue to exist in its full value and truth . . . even if it were possible for negative criticism, doing the impossible, entirely to undermine the grounds for our belief in the *historical* appearance of Christ. The religion which Jesus founded is not true because he founded it; but it would be true and divine in itself, even if it had another historical origin than that from which in the writings of the New Testament it is derived. We do not hold the Christian religion to be true because we are convinced that the Son of God founded it, but on the contrary,

[35] *Ibid.*, i, p. 170.

we recognize Jesus as the Son of God, because he founded the *true* religion.[36]

In these last words we see what Scholten everywhere assumes, that Christianity is not a religion about Jesus, but the religion of Jesus. He calls it 'the religion which Jesus recommended to the world'.[37] Jesus is the one 'who for the world placed the light of the true religion upon the candlestick'.[38] Most explicitly of all this is stated in Scholten's little Latin textbook of dogmatics:[39] '*Religio idcirco Christiana haud alia est, quam Christi ipsius religio.*' This is of the utmost importance, for thus the way was opened, as soon as Scholten's critical theories of the New Testament changed, for him to abandon not only his belief in the miracles, but all real Christology as well. Christ the Saviour in the end disappears (the figure never formed a real element in his system), and instead remains only the loved memory of the founder, for whom no absolute claims are made, who in his day pointed men not to himself but to God.

The *Leer der Hervormde Kerk* drew a sharp fire of criticism from all quarters, Catholic, orthodox Protestant, Groningen school, and old liberals. But the

[36] *Ibid.*, i, p. 174. [37] *Ibid.* i, p. 174. [38] *Ibid.*, i, p. 171.

[39] J. H. Scholten, *Dogmaticae Christianae initia* (Lugd. Batav., probably 1853–4, cf. Roessingh, *Moderne theologie*, p. 109); 2nd ed., *Dogmatices*, &c. (1856–7). A book of short numbered paragraphs, bristling with Scripture texts, interesting in places, but not comparable with his greater works. Quotation from 2nd ed., p. 102.

feature which produced the deepest effect was its absolute determinism, with its attribution even of sin and unbelief to the will and plan of God. In 1858 appeared Hoekstra's book, *Freedom in Connexion with Self-Consciousness, Morality, and Sin*,[40] not intended strictly as a polemic against Scholten, yet setting forth a view of the will which left room for a limited freedom and indeterminism. In reply, Scholten produced in the next year his work on *Free Will*,[41] in which he goes thoroughly into the problem of determinism. Much of the book is taken up with the usual type of objections to indeterminism: it destroys the continuity of the moral life; if true, it would make mutual confidence and social life impossible; it contradicts the law of development in morals; it makes virtue and sin the result of chance; and much more of the same kind. What is more important for us is Scholten's treatment of the difficulties raised by determinism as to the character of God, the value of prayer, &c.

The only freedom that exists is a determined freedom. The pendulum of a clock is free when nothing hinders it from swinging in its normal course. Such freedom has various forms. The animal is free in the form of natural

[40] S. Hoekstra Bzn., *Vrijheid in verband met zelfbewustheid, zedelijkheid, en zonde* (Amsterdam, 1858).

[41] J. H. Scholten, *De vrije wil* (Leiden, 1859); German Tr., *Der freie Wille* (Berlin, 1874).

impulse; man in the form of deliberation and choice, and the subsequent self-determination and will. 'Where a man wills, there he is free; there not another is active, but himself.'[42] But this unhindered choice is determined by motives, and so comes under the law of causality.

It is charged that determinism makes men content in their sins, and is thus harmful to morality. But determinism, says Scholten, does not remove *regret*, and what goes beyond regret, viz. self-accusation, is uncalled for. We ought not to accuse ourselves any more than others. We blame and punish evil-doers solely in order to *change* them. So we do not blame one who is ugly, small, or weak, simply because here blame would have no effect. But in both cases pity is what we should feel. So to think of God's punishments as retribution is to proceed on an antiquated theory of penology.[43] Not determinism, but indeterminism is hurtful to morality, for it breeds pride, lovelessness, hate, carelessness, and intolerance.

Determinism is truly religious, for it emphasizes man's dependence on God.

> In Jesus, the strongest consciousness of his own strength, which feels itself able to conquer the world even on a cross, is connected with the consciousness . . . that what he accomplishes is worked in him by God. . . . True religion presupposes dependence upon God, not in the form of passivity . . . but in the form in which one's own strength is

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 94. [43] *Ibid.*, pp. 197–239.

regarded as a strength of God dwelling within man, one's self-active thought and activity as inward revelation, calling, and drawing of God.[44]

But on the indeterministic basis, man can claim something which he does not owe to God, and so the fundamental thought of religion is lost.

With regard to prayer, Hoekstra had asked: 'Who will in earnest ask for something, if he is sure that everything is already unalterably decided?' Scholten answers: We do not do this. Prayer is not a persuading of God. That would be irreligious as well as irrational. The indeterminist can pray for rain, for health, but not for a pure heart and a good will, for these are in his own power, not God's. Thus he prays only for lesser goods, and for these not religiously but selfishly. But for the determinist, prayer is fellowship with God, in which he need not check himself from asking for his needs, since all good comes from God; but he must pray: Thy will be done. Such prayer gives consolation and strength.[45]

Once more, only determinism can have a real revelation (outward truth plus inward apprehension of it). On the indeterministic view, man must open his own eyes. How then can God reveal?[46] And only determinism gives assurance of redemption—not from guilt, which

[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 254–5.
[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 257–62.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 262 *et seq.*

does not exist objectively, but from the feeling of guilt, and still more from sin itself. The indeterminist can only say: God wishes and seeks to be a Redeemer.[47] When we say: Forgive us our debts, it means that we are assured that nothing can separate us from the love of God. What we desire is not release from penalty, which does not exist in any case, but the continuance of God's love in spite of our sin.[48]

But what of the character of God? If God is responsible for all that exists, how can He be righteous, holy, and loving? And here Scholten can answer only by modifying the common understanding of these attributes. God is righteous, not as requiting (this, we have seen, is antiquated penology); nor as giving to each what is his due, since God owes nothing to any one; but as upholder of the moral order, in which, ultimately, virtue and happiness go together. The God of indeterminism cannot secure this, and so is not righteous.[49] So again, God is loving, not in the fashion of human love for *another*, but His love is an indwelling, an 'in-living', of which we can form no representation, but which religious experience knows to be a reality.[50] And God's holiness is not denied by the fact of sin. Sin is an incident in the transition from animal life to spiritual life. 'So then sin is entirely comprehensible in a world-order in which life

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 269 *et seq.*
[48] *Der freie Wille*, p. 188.
[49] *De vrije wil*, pp. 367–74.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 374 *et seq.*

and the dominion of spirit issue not all at once, but by stages, out of the state of nature.' 'Sin, so regarded, is not a disturbing element in the world-order.' 'God nowhere works anything evil, but . . . He does not everywhere work moral good, and where He works it, does not everywhere work it in the same measure.' But Scholten denies that this view produces indifference, for God has made it impossible for us to be content with imperfection, once we have seen what we may become.[51]

In his book on the Fourth Gospel,[52] Scholten came over to the theory of its late origin. As late as 1863 he had still objected to Renan's *Vie de Jésus*, and persisted in regarding Jesus as the embodied religious ideal of humanity.[53] But now he admitted that hitherto his theology had influenced his exegesis; it is now time to exchange the metaphysical Son of God of Biblical and ecclesiastical dogmatics for the son of man whom history presents to us, in his moral loftiness.[54] The belief in the resurrection of Jesus (not, of course, his immortality) is gone too. 'That conviction [that Jesus had returned from Hades] was the natural result of the impression which Jesus during his life had made upon his own.'[55] And in his later writings he no longer makes Jesus the

[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 358–67.

[52] J. H. Scholten, *Het Evangelie naar Johannes* (Leiden, 1864).

[53] J. H. Scholten, *Het leven van Jezus door Ernest Renan. Toespraak bij de opening der akademische lessen* (Leiden, 1863).

[54] Scholten, *Ev. naar Joh.*, pp. iii–iv, vi. [55] *Ibid.*, p. 344.

perfect exemplar of humanity, but contents himself with saying that 'the name of the founder of our religion remains with us in thankful remembrance', and that 'to Jesus is due the honour of having awakened the new spirit and of having given the first impulse to the regeneration of humanity which dates from Christianity'.[56]

One more fundamental objection to his whole system received special treatment from Scholten in his pamphlet, *Supernaturalism in Connexion with Bible, Christianity, and Protestantism*,[57] the objection, namely, that the denial of the supernatural constituted a distinct break with historical and Biblical Christianity. The Bible, says Scholten, cannot be said to be 'supernaturalistic', since it has not the modern idea of 'nature' or a 'natural order'. It knows only usual and unusual acts of God. But modern supernaturalism, according to which every realm of phenomena conquered by science is thereby withdrawn from the direct activity of God, is thoroughly irreligious and un-Biblical. Modern theology has simply discovered more clearly God's method of working, in a way which was denied to the ancients for lack of physical, psychological, and historical science. As for its being Christian, Jesus based his teachings on the witness of his own spirit, just as the moderns claim the right to

[56] Roessingh, *Moderne theologie*, p. 134.

[57] J. H. Scholten, *Supranaturalisme in verband met Bijbel, Christendom, en Protestantisme. Een vraag des tijds beantwoord* (Leiden, 1867).

do. And as for Protestantism, supernaturalism in the Reformation was merely a survival. In its doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, in its attempt to restore primitive Christianity, in its emphasis upon the naturalness of religion in man, the Reformation contained the germs of the later rejection of supernaturalism. Modernism is thus pure Protestantism.

This, then, is the theology of Scholten, a theistic monism, deterministic, 'anti-supernaturalistic', optimistic. Its distinguishing characteristic, as against the theology of Opzoomer and Hoekstra, is that it claims to be established by reflection upon the data of the natural world. It needs neither postulate, act of faith, nor special faculty. Reason alone is adequate.

We pass now to Opzoomer and his followers, whose results were like those of Scholten, but who built on another foundation, a foundation which in some instances failed them.

3. *Opzoomer and the Empirical School.*

Very soon after coming to Utrecht, Opzoomer came under the spell of the natural sciences, and gave up the speculative method for the empirical. Yet the empiricism which he adopted was peculiar. Reality for Opzoomer fell into two realms, the material and the spiritual world. Man has organs of perception adapted to each kind of reality, for the one, his senses, for the other, feeling.

More fully, man has five sources of knowledge: sense-perception, the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, aesthetic feeling, ethical feeling, religious feeling.[58] The first three alone yield materialism; the first four alone positivism; the last alone gives a harmful mysticism; but the combination of all gives a sound knowledge of reality, a view of the world both religious and scientific.[59]

This theory of knowledge is meant to be definitely anti-Kantian. 'The laws to which man is bound in his thinking, are not laws of that thinking itself, but are laws of that world which is the object of his thinking.'[60] Man in his thought connects facts, draws conclusions, &c., but this work is only imitation of nature, not our creation. So far, an agreement with Scholten. Yet also a difference. Scholten would not admit that nature alone leads to materialism. Science, to Scholten, discerns not only the existence of matter, but fixed laws, unity, order, harmony, and so an indwelling Mind.[61] It was now Scholten's turn to decry dependence upon religious feeling. Such a method might lead to belief in anything—spooks, witchcraft, Mariolatry. He insists that we must find God via science or not at all. Materialism

[58] C. W. Opzoomer, *De weg der wetenschap, een handboek der logica* (Leiden and Amsterdam, 1851), pp. 27–39.

[59] *Ibid.*, pp. 42–51.

[60] Roessingh, *Moderne theologie*, p. 149–50.

[61] Scholten, *De vrije wil*, p. 386.

must be attacked in its first principles, and removed from natural science as well as from psychology.[62]

But to Opzoomer and his followers, it is only the religious feeling that gives us knowledge of God.[63] The understanding cannot do it. Opzoomer sharply attacks the classic arguments for God, as one and all failing to give us what we seek, because they do not take us outside the world of finite facts. But in the religious feeling we have an additional organ of perception.

There are two tendencies in this empirical school, one more dogmatic, the other more sceptical.[64] The former is represented by Opzoomer himself, the latter by one of his disciples, the brilliant Allard Pierson. The question at stake is: How much does the religious feeling give us? The answer in both cases is: Simply *that* God is, that the world-order is ultimately perfectly good and beautiful. But to Opzoomer this is a confirmation of hints already given by nature. It is true that nature alone would give us materialism; but once the religious feeling has given us the certainty of God, we can fit this knowledge and our knowledge of nature into one scheme. In fact, he

[62] J. H. Scholten, *Het kritisch standpunt van Mr. C. W. Opzoomer beoordeeld* (Amsterdam, 1860), *passim.*

[63] In an unpublished letter to Pierson Opzoomer admitted that the theory of a special religious faculty was a last resort to save theism. 'Wij grepen het aan, omdat wij geen ander middel zagen, om de erkenning van God, dien wij niet konden opgeven, te redden.' Roessingh, *Moderne theologie*, p. 168, note 1.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 157.

approaches Scholten's position in these words from his book, *Religion*: 'Is the expectation perhaps so ungrounded, that the deeper the eye of science penetrates into the things of the world, the more probable it will seem to it, that the cause of that world is unlimited wisdom, in other words, that religious faith may also be called rational faith?'[65] Opzoomer therefore makes bold to conclude other things about God beside His existence, e. g. His personality.

But Pierson was unable to come to so confident a world-view. To him, religious feeling did not supplement, but rather contradicted the verdict of science. Science gave materialism, feeling gave God, and the two views remained unreconciled. Or again, the antinomy was between religion and philosophy.

> The God of religious feeling is for the reasoning understanding little more than a poetic representation, a variegated combination of contradictions; the God of the understanding is for religious feeling little more than an abstract concept, the predicateless Absolute. . . . In one word, religious feeling demands that there be a relation between God and man, God and the world, and the only possible concept of an absolute and infinite Being excludes every other relation between that Being and anything else, save the relation between the whole and its parts.[66]

With this sense of irreconcilable contradiction, it is

[65] C. W. Opzoomer, *De godsdienst* (Amsterdam, 1864), p. 417.

[66] A. Pierson, *Rigting en leven*, 2 vols. (Haarlem, 1863), i, pp. 54, 57.

small wonder that Pierson eventually lost confidence in the testimony of religious feeling, and gave up the attempt to hold both views together. Opzoomer, it appears, never felt this antithesis, but to the end of his days retained his religious faith.[67]

Let us now examine more closely Opzoomer's theism. What did his empirical philosophy give him? For a brief time after adopting empiricism he held to indeterminism, on the ground of man's sense of freedom and responsibility.[68] But soon he gave this up, in favour of 'the unlimited sway of the great law of causality'.[69] The religious man identifies this reign of natural necessity with the will of God. So we come to Opzoomer's great definitions: 'Religious faith is nothing else than the acknowledgement that God reigns, and that He is wisdom and love; religion is nothing else than the disposition of mind which fills man, when he is deeply penetrated by that faith.'[70] This is not pantheism, for on this view 'the world is nowhere in a single one of its phenomena outside of God, and yet it acknowledges God as independent above the world, and does not make the

[67] A. Pierson, *Over Opzoomer* (in *De Gids*, 1893, vol. i), p. 434.

[68] Opzoomer, *De weg der wetenschap*, pp. 14, 15.

[69] Opzoomer, *De godsdienst*, p. 61.

[70] 'Het godsdienstig geloof is niets anders dan de erkenning dat God regeert, en dat hij wijsheid en liefde is; de godsdienst is niets anders dan de gemoedsstemming, die den mensch vervult, wanneer hij van dat geloof diep doordrongen is.' *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Divine self-consciousness to be absorbed into the life of the world or into human consciousness'.[71] 'Personality' and 'consciousness' are terms borrowed from human experience, but Opzoomer cannot say less for God. Even Fichte, he notes, cannot altogether avoid anthropomorphism, nor can Spinoza.[72]

Of the famous triad of beliefs, God, freedom, immortality, Opzoomer regards only the first as essential to religion. Insistence upon freedom is in fact irreligious, since the religious man desires only that God's will be done; while faith in immortality, though an aid to religion, is not in itself a religious, but a scientific question.[73] His theology can therefore be summed up in a single doctrine—God.

But if God is perfect wisdom as well as perfect love, then the world must be a perfectly harmonious work of art.[74] What then of evil? This problem is attacked without hesitation. Evil exists only from man's point of view. There are two *wereldbeschouwingen*, or views of the world, the finite and the infinite. According to

[71] '. . . want met deze voorstelling is de wereld nergens, in geen enkel harer verschijnselen, buiten God, en toch erkent zij God als zelfstandig boven de wereld, en laat het goddelijke zelfbewustzijn niet in het wereldleven of in het bewustzijn van den mensch opgaan.' *Ibid.*, p. 216–17.

[72] He quotes from Jacobi: 'Den Mensch schaffend theomorphisirte Gott, nothwendig anthropomorphisirt darum der Mensch.' *Ibid.*, p. 318.

[73] *Ibid.*, p. 15 *et seq.*

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 285.

the former, things are good or bad. Man must hate sin and overcome it. But things are good or bad, in this finite sense, only with reference to particular ends. In themselves, as necessary parts of the whole, all things are good and right. It is not indifferentism which is thus gained. The infinite world-view 'resolves the antithesis of good and evil, not into the concept of necessity, but into the concept of the perfectly good'.[75] Opzoomer quotes from Pope:

> If storms and earthquakes break not God's design,
> Why then a Borgia or a Catiline?[76]

Quite in the vein of Scholten he says: 'All that is, has, so long as it is and so far as it reaches, a Divine right of existence, for it was willed by God. But it was not so willed by God, that it must remain eternally.'[77]

God may be called holy, as willing the disappearance of evil, and righteous, as fostering righteousness. It was natural in the past that men should also think of God as angry, forgiving, accepting the vicarious sacrifice. But these conceptions could endure only while the fact of God's sovereignty was not consistently thought out, and the true role of sin not understood.[78]

Miracles, of course, are excluded as thoroughly as in his earlier, Krausean philosophy, but now not on speculative grounds, but on the ground of the testimony of

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 84.
[76] *Ibid.*, p. 41.
[77] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[78] *Ibid.*, p. 312 *et seq.*

science. In Pierson's words: 'Everything happens through natural causes, nowhere is the rational mind under obligation to take refuge in a supernatural cause.'[79]

Is Opzoomer still a Christian? If Christianity is the religion of loving trust in God taught by Jesus, then he claims the name; but if Christianity involves belief in miracles, even if only in the bodily resurrection of Jesus, Opzoomer is willing to let the name go, and be content with pure religion. Yet he feels it not only a right but a duty to call himself a Christian, in gratitude to Jesus. By what other name shall modernists call themselves? Have they advanced upon Jesus in religion, that they should not bear his name?[80]

Opzoomer, however, does not use the New Testament as a rule of faith, but only as a source of historical knowledge. He is thus able to avoid a common fault of liberal Protestantism, that of making Jesus a nineteenth-century religious teacher, instead of a child of his own age. In this he was in advance of Scholten.[81]

[79] A. Pierson, *De oorsprong der moderne richting* (Haarlem, 1862), p. 38.

[80] Opzoomer, *De godsdienst*, p. 424.

[81] Opzoomer agrees with Renan, who says (preface to 13th ed. of the *Vie de Jésus*): 'On tient à le présenter comme l'homme de bon sens, l'homme pratique par excellence; on le transforme à l'image et selon le cœur de la théologie moderne.... Scholten et Schenkel tiennent, certes, pour un Jésus historique et réel; mais leur Jésus n'est ni un Messie, ni un prophète, ni un Juif.' *Ibid.*, p. 467, 468, note.

Opzoomer also feels himself a true son of the Reformation. Protestant orthodoxy is not true Protestantism.

> If our forebears, when they sat in thick darkness, lit a candle, because they could invent no better means of illumination, but yet in that deed showed themselves as friends of the light and enemies of the darkness, do you really believe they follow most in their footsteps, who to-day still continue to sit by their candle-light and preach a crusade against the gas-flame? Without knowing or wishing it, the Reformers became also the fathers of free thought. But not of free thought alone. Unlimited freedom, but at the same time earnest and genuine religion.[82]

Medieval scholasticism aimed unsuccessfully at a reconciliation of faith and knowledge. But Opzoomer looks hopefully for a new scholasticism, which shall accomplish this reconciliation for the modern mind. He hails Lessing, Herder, Goethe, Schiller, Kant, and Fichte, as those who while leaders of free thought, yet felt the need of religion for the heart. These men, and especially Schleiermacher, were forerunners of the new reconciliation. The new scholasticism has a better chance of success, he thinks, because thought is now free, knowledge is abundant, and faith is divested of irrelevant absurdities. This is very far from the feeling of bafflement which we saw in Allard Pierson.

The close resemblance between Opzoomer and Scholten is evident. In many cases, the influence of both men

[82] *Ibid.*, pp. 475, 477.

was brought to bear on the same minds; for it was not uncommon for students to begin their academical careers at Utrecht, under the fascination of Opzoomer, and then to finish their theological studies at Leiden, under the overpowering influence of Scholten. Those who had undergone this training were not at first able to appreciate the suggestive approach to religious faith which was being developed by Hoekstra. To him we now turn.

4. *Hoekstra.*

Sytse Hoekstra Bzn.[83] was from 1859 professor at the theological seminary of the Mennonites in Amsterdam. In his earlier writings his modernism is not fully apparent; many of them were popular and intended for edification, so that much old terminology was used. But one fact from the first puts Hoekstra with the moderns: he does not approach religion by the route of authority.

Both Scholten and Opzoomer started out from a particular view of the world, and into this they fitted the life of the human spirit as best they could. In so doing, they were in danger of doing inadequate justice to psychological facts which might not fit into the philosophical presuppositions. In contrast to this, Hoekstra begins with the study of the religious man himself. 'Religion, not the abstract concept of Deity, is the object

[83] Bzn. or Bz. is an abbreviation for *B-zoon*, i. e. 'son of B. Hoekstra'.

of theological science.'[84] Thus Hoekstra is able to attach a real significance to terms like sin, grace, regeneration, redemption, freedom, personality. As opposed to the empirical method, he calls his own view 'idealism' (not, of course, in the sense of the German philosophical idealism of a short time before). The root of Hoekstra's 'idealism' is the thesis: 'All faith in a supersensible world rests upon faith in the truth of our own inner being.'[85] In his inner being man finds himself to be a moral personality, requiring for his development a moral world-order adapted to personality. But the empirical world of science does not meet this need. Instead, it makes man the plaything of natural forces, of a blind, heedless mechanism. But man, believing in the reality of what he finds within, concludes that what science gives cannot be the whole truth. He *postulates* a supersensible world, not paralleling, but supplementing the sensible world—a world of spiritual reality of which the mechanism of nature is only a part. We have here a modified Kantianism. Not the moral imperative alone, but man's whole nature compels him to postulate what science does not give.[86]

[84] Hoekstra, *Vrijheid*, p. 396.

[85] 'Alle geloof aan eene bovenzinnelijke wereld rust op het geloof aan de waarheid van ons innerlijk wezen.' S. Hoekstra, *Bronnen en grondslagen van het godsdienstig geloof* (Amsterdam, 1864), p. 24.

[86] In epistemology, Hoekstra is anti-Kantian. Roessingh, *Moderne theologie*, p. 171.

It is thus our need which drives us to God. 'One seeks Deity only when one needs it.'[87] But the needs which legitimately bring us to God are only such as are common to all men, and such as pertain, not to the harmony and beauty of human life, but to its essence. That spiritual world, without which my essential human needs would be mocked, I may postulate. And this postulate is inherently reasonable; for if man were a product of the naturalistic scheme of things, his inner and outer experience would harmonize. But since his inner needs cannot be satisfied in the empirical world, the empirical view of the world cannot be the whole truth. It all rests ultimately upon the conviction 'that the objective world-order cannot be in irreconcilable disharmony with, but that it must answer to, that ideal striving which for our feeling is life itself'.[88]

Such faith, for Hoekstra, is not only man's deed. It is also a work of God in us, in a way beyond our understanding.

On the basis, then, of man's spiritual needs, Hoekstra postulates God and immortality. But religious representations (such as that of the personality of God) are always inadequate, and belong in a different group of concepts from those of science. To use them as logical premises, from which to draw conclusions, is bound to

[87] Hoekstra, *Bronnen*, p. 71.
[88] Hoekstra, in *Theologisch Tijdschrift*, 1872, p. 15.

lead to many contradictions. Hoekstra himself leaves many contradictions unresolved; such as God's ruling power and the guilt of sin; foreknowledge and freedom; God's foreseeing wisdom and the answering of prayer; foreordination and new plans on God's part. Since such ideas are inadequate *voorstellingen*, they need not be logically consistent with each other, though they represent realities.

Hoekstra's Christology went through a gradual change. At first he thought of Jesus as something more than human. Later he held that Jesus' moral perfection was humanly possible, and still maintained belief in the miracles on the ground of this moral perfection. Later he gave up the miracles.[89]

As we have seen, Hoekstra maintained a doctrine of indeterminism. This flowed naturally from his insistence on 'the reality of the inward being'. Personality, individuality, every human being in a way a genius—this led naturally to a belief in freedom. 'Freedom of choice is the power, under the same circumstances, and with the same inner and outer motives, of attaining different choices.'[90] 'The indeterminist denies that the law of causality, which in unconscious and perhaps also in animal life reigns unconditionally, also reigns unconditionally in the realm of the spirit.'[91] The will, therefore

[89] Roessingh, *Moderne theologie*, p. 182, note 1.
[90] Hoekstra, *Vrijheid*, p. 102. [91] *Ibid.*, p. 80, cf. p. 177.

(granting that in most actions no real choice is made), is a realm of real chance, for which the harmony of the universe leaves room. And sin is not a stage in evolution, but is due to man's free choice.

All this was nearer to the testimony of religious feeling, but as a system it could not compete for impressiveness with the imposing monism taught at Leiden and in the philosophical lecture-room at Utrecht.

CHAPTER III

THE 'ETHICAL MODERNS'[1]

In the late sixties and at intervals throughout the decade of the seventies, the moderns were engaged in controversy over the 'ethical' question. The occasion was the violent revolt of a group of young moderns against certain aspects of 'old-modernism', viz. against its optimistic, philosophical theism. The views of these men were not unusual in the modern world; what was unique, so far as I am aware, was the attempt to expound a religion of agnosticism *within the Christian church*.

The great naturalistic theism with which the *moderne richting* had set out to revise theology, contained within itself the seeds of a revolt. It was first and foremost a philosophy, built on the doctrine of causality, and into the mould of this philosophy religion was poured, to take such form as it could. And there were some among its preachers who began to be aware that it would not do.

[1] This group must not be confused with the *ethische richting* of the present day, who, while starting out from religious experience and not from external authority, still arrive in their theology at various shades of moderate orthodoxy. They are spiritual descendants of the elder Chantepie de la Saussaye, and have no connexion with the modernists.

An important attack upon this aspect of the 'modern' theology was made from the orthodox side by J. Cramer, in two pamphlets, *The Illusion of the Modern School* and *Contrition and Ethical Determinism*.[2] Cramer declared that the 'modern' theology gave no ground for the hope of immortality, had no place for prayer in the sense of asking, could not explain contrition, and paralysed the struggle against sin. Replies were made from the modernist side. Some, like van Manen,[3] declined to identify modernism with determinism, and so warded off part of the attack. But there were those who recognized that their system was hit in a weak place.

Another attack, and one which made an even deeper impression, came from within the movement, from Allard Pierson, who by this time had found the pastorate an impossible position,[4] and had already attacked Scholten's system as pantheistic and as denying the righteousness and holiness of God.[5] He now published a pamphlet entitled *God's Miraculous Power and our Spiritual Life*.[6] In this he declared that the 'modern' theology attempted

[2] J. Cramer, *De illusie der moderne richting* (Amsterdam, 1867) and *Het berouw en het ethisch determinisme* (Amsterdam, 1868).

[3] W. C. van Manen, *Het godsdienstig karakter der nieuwe richting, tegen de bedenkingen van Dr. J. Cramer verdedigd* ('s Hertogenbosch, 1869).

[4] See Chapter IV.

[5] A. Pierson, in *De Gids*, 1859, vol. 1, pp. 749-98.

[6] A. Pierson, *Gods wondermacht en ons geestelijk leven* (Arnhem, 1867).

to combine two mutually exclusive ideas, God the Father and God the Sovereign; but it was God the Father who disappeared in the combination. It is only by an inconsistency, he says, that the modernist who will not pray for the lifting of an epidemic of cholera, prays for a pure heart; for the pure heart or its contrary is just as much the result of the inexorable working of cause and effect as is disease of the body. It is useless, therefore, to ask it from God.[7] It is only a mockery when the modernist uses the language of religion, and speaks of this power in nature, which is nothing else than the reign of natural necessity, as our Father. 'And if you call that natural necessity, in which the individual is counted as nothing, the unfolding of God's Fatherly love, then I answer you with another blasphemy, that my father-heart knows better than your God, what fatherly love is.'[8]

So came to expression the feeling that was rising in the hearts of some pastors, that the imposing system they had been taught, which had seemed the final successful combination of science and religion, as a matter of fact surrendered to science what religion could not afford to lose. It was a gain for the intellect to be rid of the

[7] Opzoomer said prayer is not a request, but the expression of a fervent wish, quite compatible with determinism. One misses, in these discussions, any conception of prayer as in itself a producer of results, a cause, of which petition is only the form or technique.

[8] Pierson, *op. cit.*, quoted in Herderschee, *Modern-godsdienstige richting*, p. 308.

supernatural, but it was an unquestioned loss for the heart. Instead of a God who concerns Himself directly with our affairs, who at least in the past was known to have intervened in the regular course of nature to reveal Himself and save man, one had now only 'a God eternally working in the course of centuries and the swing of worlds and the interchange of molecules—and man, little man, carried along in all this like a piece of a wreck on the lashed waves of this eternally tossing world-sea'.[9]

The system of Scholten and Opzoomer was thus attacked on two grounds: by its determinism it made meaningless the deepest experiences of the moral and religious life; and by its identification of God with the Absolute of philosophy it had taken away the God of religion and left only Necessity. So came to many a new thought. A mistake had been made in the identification. The God of religion and the Absolute, or the system of nature, must be distinguished. Not in nature and history must God be sought, but in the heart of man, in his religious aspirations, in the moral imperative heard by the conscience, apart from or in spite of what science might seem to say about man's place in the universe.

[9] '. . . een God, eeuwig werkend in den loop der eeuwen en den zwaai der werelden en de wisseling der stofdeeltjes, en den mensch, den kleinen mensch daarin meegevoerd als het stuk van een wrak op de voortgezweepte baren dezer eeuwig woelende wereldzee . . . .' J. W. van der Linden in *De Gids*, 1883, vol. iv, pp. 453–4.

Men turned to Hoekstra, with his psychological approach to religion. 'Faith in the reality of one's own inner life'—yes, that was the right method. But because the new point of view was a reaction, they went beyond Hoekstra. He had, from the needs of man as a spirit, drawn conclusions about the constitution of the world. But the ethicals would have no philosophizing about the world. No Creator-God, they said, but God the Holy Spirit; not God as the power controlling nature, for nature reveals no such God, but God as 'the power not ourselves that makes for righteousness'. This phrase of Matthew Arnold's is repeatedly quoted. But once more, the reaction went still further, until we find some denying even this objective moral power working in the world, and God becomes the name for the moral ideal in our hearts. All the ethicals agreed that 'religion is moral idealism'; but some meant by this a 'religion without metaphysics', that is to say, a moral idealism combinable, if necessary, with agnosticism or atheism.

The first sign of the new way of thinking was an article by Rauwenhoff in 1868, setting forth with sympathy and general approval the theological method of Hoekstra.[10] Then followed clearer utterances—Jungius on *Nature and Religion*, Hooykaas on *God in History*, and a book containing four lectures by different

[10] L. W. E. Rauwenhoff, *Theologisch Tijdschrift*, 1868, 'Empirisme en idealisme volgens S. Hoekstra Bzn'.

representatives of the new tendency.[11] A busy discussion arose in periodicals, and at the annual meetings of the modernists. Neither side won a victory, but eventually the ethical movement quietly died out.

The ethicals fall into several types, which we shall consider separately. We begin with the group usually regarded as the pure type of the *ethische richting*, represented by Jungius, Hooykaas, and probably Oort. Jungius said that modernism as hitherto known could only preach passive submission to nature. But this is wrong. The terrible power of nature must be resisted. Such resistance would destroy religion, were it not that God is not nature, but the power of holy love. So we can oppose nature with a good conscience. The relation of God to nature is an unsolved problem. We hope for a solution, a unity, but we do not start out from it.[12]

Hooykaas sharply opposes the view that God is the Doer of all that happens. This is a confusion of religion with philosophy. Such a God is a mere superfluous hypothesis; for according to modernism, God cannot be invoked to explain any particular event. All events have their finite causes, and God is only the ultimate

[11] E. C. Jungius, *Nieuw en Oud*, 1869, 'Natuur en godsdienst'; Izaak Hooykaas, *God in de geschiedenis* (Schiedam, 1870); I. Hooykaas, J. H. Herderschee, H. Oort, and A. G. van Hamel, *Godsdienst volgens de beginselen der ethische richting onder de modernen* ('s Hertogenbosch, 1876).

[12] Herderschee, *Modern-godsdienstige richting*, p. 309.

cause of the totality of events. But such a God might as well not be mentioned at all. Worse still, to attribute all events to the will of God does violence to man's sense of right and wrong. If every evil, sin, and horror known to human life comes from God, then such a God may be the Absolute, but for religion He is not God. That cannot be Divine which my conscience tells me is evil. The fault lies here: that men have formed an antecedent concept of God, and then have put this into history. But Hooykaas proposes to ask simply, *where* in history do we actually find God, not a concept of God but God Himself? Of God in Himself we can know nothing. Only that aspect of God which meets us can we know. And this discernible aspect of God cannot be found everywhere in history, but only where we see the operation of a spirit of goodness, light, and love. God is the Holy Spirit. Hooykaas will not deny that God controls all things, but of this he knows nothing. He builds only on what is given in experience, the influences felt in human life which lead us to righteousness and all good. And these influences are but variations of one Power. This Power, then, is God.

This is quite in the vein of Matthew Arnold. One is reminded, also, of H. G. Wells's *God the Invisible King*, who is distinct from the Veiled Being who is the source of existence. But if Hooykaas ever thought of his God as a sort of finite being working with a personal purpose

within the limitations of an intractable material, he soon abandoned any such personalism. In the little book of the four lectures he says:

> It is not meant in this sense, that our conscience or our sense of duty points us to God, so that we may or must accept His existence. By no means! Law and Lawgiver are for me one; I know of no Lawgiver save in that law, neither apart from it, nor above it; my duty, or the 'thou must' is God. I cannot see it otherwise.[13]

God, then, is not personal. But the distinguishing characteristic of this 'pure ethical' school, is that their God, even if not personal, is an objective reality, not a mere ideal in our minds. The action of this objective power, this moral order, this moral compulsion, we *undergo* and do not create.

Theoretically, this view of religion could go with any philosophy. All the ethicals, of whatever shade, insisted that religion is not a theory of the world, but a *levensbeschouwing*, a view of life. But Hooykaas acknowledged that in the long run his ethical religion would discourage *some* views of the world, e.g. that Ahriman had created physical nature, that with the decline of our planet all human achievements will be destroyed, that in economics *laissez-faire* is the only right method irrespective of the fate of the labouring class, that the law of nations, races, and classes is and must

[13] *Godsdienst volgens de beginselen, &c.*, p. 26.

be the survival of the strong. A favourite phrase with many of the ethicals was, 'We are monists in hope'; but Hooykaas is very shy of saying too much about the order of nature. He has but one postulate: the triumph of the good.[14]

But among the ethicals Hooykaas felt himself to be treading a lonely road, in holding to the objectivity of the moral power.[15] Certainly the controversial literature of the decade shows that many of them were for going further, and dispensing with everything save the moral ideal in the mind of the individual. 'Of a *working of God* upon us, upon our life and lot, we have no experience and so no consciousness, so that we give up that term as one for us quite empty.'[16]

The whole question was discussed at the April meeting of modernists in 1874, when van Hamel (then pastor of the Walloon church at Rotterdam) read a paper on 'Religion without Metaphysics'. In the *Theologisch Tijdschrift* of that year Ph. R. Hugenholtz published a refutation. Van Hamel then contributed the original paper with amplifications, and two years later Hugenholtz returned to the attack.[17]

[14] I. Hooykaas, *Theol. Tijdschr.*, 1875, 'Ter beschrijving van de ethische richting', pp. 210–11.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 199.

[16] J. H. Herderschee, *Theol. Tijdschr.*, 1875, 'Schakeersels van modernen', p. 82.

[17] A. G. van Hamel, *Theol. Tijdschr.*, 1874, 'Godsdienst zonder

Van Hamel argues that the element of philosophy, hitherto always present in religions, is secondary. The main thing in all religions is an attitude toward life. A god is not simply a higher being, but a power related to our life. On the level of sensuous living, men had nature-gods; Israel's national consciousness was expressed in faith in a national god; Christianity is an expression of ethical idealism—Jesus' Heavenly Father is the ethical impulse objectified. Now, as long as men thought in a supernaturalistic way, such needs or ideals were accompanied by theories about the world; hence came gods, a doctrine of providence, &c. But once supernaturalism is gone, this must cease. It is useless to fill the place of these old theories with a speculative theory of Divine government. God's particular acts (under the old scheme) cannot be equated with natural necessity (which the modern view gives us instead). Providence thus disappears. The Israelitish theodicy was admittedly mistaken; but so, then, is the Christian. Hoekstra had only asserted a theodicy, never traced it out. Many suppose that such a metaphysical faith in God is indispensable as a support to moral idealism; but, on the contrary, it is only the moral idealism which supports the metaphysics. In the process of thus disposing of the objective reference of religion, van Hamel

metafysica'; Ph. R. Hugenholtz, *Theol. Tijdschr.*, 1874 and 1876, 'Het wezen en het recht van den godsdienst' (three articles).

makes some interesting reinterpretations of familiar religious terms. 'Providence' means that the earnest man finds that *any* occurrence can turn out for his good. 'Forgiveness of sins' means, not that for the Absolute the antithesis of good and evil falls away (as the old-moderns held), but that the sense of sin ceases to hinder moral progress when we give ourselves afresh to the ideal. Hooykaas had said at the meeting that he could still find a real meaning in the words 'We love Him because He first loved us'. What van Hamel understands him to mean is 'that the ethical ideal had made him feel its attractiveness, before he had thought of devoting all his love to this ideal'.[18]

In 1877 Prof. A. Bruining followed the hint given by van Hamel, and tried to show that the ethical view (so far from being a retreat before the negative results of science) was the making clear of what had always been the real nature of historical religion.[19] 'Is the identification of God, the object of religion, with the Highest Being, the fundamental cause of all things, from which both the idealistic and the intellectualistic monists[20]

[18] Of course this is not exactly what Hooykaas meant, as he himself protested, because he believed in an objective power working upon him.

[19] A. Bruining, *Theol. Tijdschr.*, 1877, pp. 129-87, 'De ethische richting en de godsdienst'.

[20] That is, the followers of Hoekstra and of Scholten–Opzoomer, respectively.

tacitly start out, historically justified?'[21] Bruining thinks not. Among the Greeks, Zeus and the gods have a beginning and are subject to fate; among the Hindus, Brahma the Absolute is not an object of worship, but only the gods, who have a beginning and an end. Both Greeks and Hindus were able to maintain a philosophy alongside of, and not interfering with, their religion. The gods are thus not philosophically conceived higher powers merely, but rather powers with whom man can deal, whose activities affect man's needs and ideals. The character of the gods corresponds to the character of man's ideals. In the earlier stages the gods are satisfiers of personal wishes, then of the needs of the group, ultimately of purely ethical aspirations. But at this stage it becomes natural to dispense with gods. For as long as man's ideals are sensuous, he must believe in gods, i.e. nature-powers, because his wishes are dependent on such. But when the ideal has become purely ethical, the supernatural gods disappear, for

> the realization of this ideal does not depend upon, and is expected by no one from, powers outside of man . . . but depends exclusively upon human activity, upon man's moral striving, which . . . finds its ground and origin in man himself. . . . From belief in and worship of supernatural gods he passes to trustful following of the higher aspirations of human nature. . . . [And so finally] the distinction between ethical and religious is at the highest stage, as Matthew

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 133.

Arnold very rightly says, only a distinction in degree; religion is morality touched by emotion.[22]

With this ethical religion, Bruining agrees that any philosophy may go that leaves room for the facts. Theism, pantheism, atheism, according to personal insight, may be regarded as consistent with religious (i. e. ethically idealistic) faith.[23] But Bruining himself does not adopt theism. 'It is this [the passion for reality] which hinders us from placing the power, which we experience in ourselves, as a person over against us.'[24]

There is loss in this, Bruining admits. Providential care over man's outward circumstances is gone. But this was gone in any case. Monism also places man's physical life, at least, in the unbroken causal connexion of nature. But he objects to the popular phrase, *godsdienst zonder goden* (religion without gods),[25] for the essence of deity is retained. The God of ethical religion is indeed a power within ourselves, the urge toward the moral ideal, the 'power that makes for righteousness', yet also in a sense 'not ourselves', because it stands above our will and rules it. 'To acknowledge that power . . . in its real significance, to appreciate it as the very highest, as the practically absolute power, that is faith;

[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 163, 165, 166.

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 172–3. [24] *Ibid.*, p. 185.

[25] There is a peculiar point in this phrase, lost in translation, due to the fact that the ordinary Dutch word for 'religion' is *godsdienst*.

to obey it unconditionally and with perfect trust, that is religion.' [26]

In 1879 van Hamel approached the problem again in the form of a doctoral dissertation on *The Doctrine of Divine Providence*.[27] In this doctrine, as in all historical religion, he finds a religious and a philosophical element. The religious element, confidence that man's ideals will be fulfilled, is permanent. But ethical ideals need no gods; and thus the religious truth contained in the doctrine comes to its rights best, when 'belief in Providence' is abandoned. On the other hand, the philosophical element in the old doctrine is for van Hamel out of the question. A causal and a teleological view of the world cannot be equated. The two explanations might supplement each other, but they cannot be made to cover the same phenomena, as is often attempted. Now the causal explanation of the world admits of no question, and covers all the phenomena. Therefore teleology is excluded.[28] Yet this is not the final word.

> We see no chance of so connecting the realities which lie at the bottom of the religious element of the belief in Providence, with our world-view, that out of the combination a new form of the doctrine of Providence is born. But we admit gladly, that our mind here meets open questions on all sides.[29]

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 166–7.

[27] A. G. van Hamel, *Proeve eener kritiek van de leer der Goddelijke voorzienigheid* (Groningen, 1879).

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 82–8. [29] *Ibid.*, pp. 100–1.

A writer difficult to place, but one who may be classified with a measure of assurance as a follower of Hoekstra, is de Bussy. He seems to believe in an objective reality corresponding to the idea of God; man would never have formed such a *voorstelling* unless an existent reality had first called it forth, or impressed it upon him.[30] But we cannot know God scientifically or philosophically. We are religious just for the reason that we cannot know. A scientific knowledge of God, if that were possible, would not be religion. Religion belongs in as separate a sphere as aesthetics or ethics, which are not in the same scheme of things with science. The God of religion has, and must have, a character; but the world-order shown us by science has no character.[31] It is futile, therefore, to try to construct a theology 'in accord with the present world-view'. De Bussy is not a 'monist in hope'. Since religious beliefs cannot be tested by investigation of the world, they must be tested by other standards. 'A religious representation is true for us, when it awakens in us a pure emotion, makes us understand our own inner life better, enriches the life of our spirit.'[32] On reflection, it appears that this does not differ particularly from the thought of Hoekstra. There

[30] I. J. le Cosquino de Bussy, *Ethisch idealisme* (Amsterdam, 1875), p. 169-70.

[31] De Bussy, *De Gids*, 1889, vol. iv, 'De ontwikkelingsgang van de moderne richting', p. 107.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 121.

is perhaps a little more insistence on the impossibility of finding God in nature, though Hoekstra, too, had no good word to say for 'empiricism'. Hoekstra also, it will be remembered, admitted the inadequate and non-scientific character of our religious representations.

The ideas of the ethical school did not go unchallenged. The attempt to disconnect religion from a world-view was sharply contested by the old-moderns. Most pungent of all was the criticism passed by Kuenen upon the extreme position of van Hamel. The name *ethische richting* Kuenen applies only to those who, like Hooykaas, at least hold to an objective power of some sort, in lieu of a God. Van Hamel's group he calls 'positivistic moderns'. The ethicals may have an inadequate conception of God, as only the Holy Spirit; but Kuenen admits that they have a God. 'They have crossed the Rubicon. The positivistic moderns, on the other hand, remain standing before that stream and regard their own image in its waters.'[33] Both ethicals and positivistic moderns agree that religion must be approached from moral experience. 'One could say that they have their *point of departure* in common—if only the positivistic moderns *departed* and arrived anywhere.'[34] Kuenen

[33] A. Kuenen, *Theol. Tijdschr.*, 1874, 'De godsdienst, de wetenschap, en het leven', p. 630.

[34] 'Men zou kunnen zeggen, dat zij het *punt van uitgang* gemeen

denies that historically religion can be identified with 'attitude to life'.

> Here is a person with certain more or less high life-needs . . . with such and such life-ideals. *Has that person religion?* Put that question to whomsoever you will, and he will answer you: That depends. If that person expects satisfaction for his life-needs from his god or gods; if he follows his manner of life in trust in higher help; if his attitude to life—yes, to put it in one word, is *religious*, then yes. But if not, then no.[35]

Kuenen sees no reason for despairing of finding God in nature and history. 'We have hitherto always maintained that we could reject supernaturalism without accepting naturalism.'[36] He believes that psychology confirms his view, for the essence of religion, psychologically, is respect or reverence (in all forms from terror to filial confidence). But this implies belief in a real power outside ourselves. Were this missing, there would be no place for reverence, and hence no religion. Van Hamel does wrong to distinguish between Jesus' belief that God knows the fall of the sparrows, and his prayer: Thy will be done on earth. Both the belief in Providence and the ethical idealism were equally a part

hebben—indien ook de positivistische modernen *uitgingen* en ergens aankwamen.' *Ibid.*, p. 629.

[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 624–5.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 635. Note that 'naturalism' here means a view in which 'nature' is the whole of reality, i.e. atheism.

of the faith of Jesus, and both elements were indispensable to it.

> We hailed Renan some time since, when in the name of history he protested against those who made Jesus into a German professor of dogmatics. Let us now see to it, that we do not picture him as a forerunner of Feuerbach. This latter error would be worse than the former.[37]

Others, too, joined in the attack, with such arguments as can readily be supposed. They are well put by Hugenholtz. The objections against making religion to be solely ethical idealism are two: 'First, that a "view of life" cannot be separated from a "view of the world", and secondly, that permanent enthusiasm for an ideal cannot exist without a trust, a faith, which again at once involves metaphysical suppositions.'[38] So Slotemaker argued against Hooykaas: If God does not control nature, He cannot help us nor be sure of victory.[39] Rauwenhoff said that Bruining, in denying God in nature, had broken the continuity of religious development. It is not the progressive purification of religion that leads to this denial, but the modern view of the world. The ethical theory is thus not a bold forward step, but a flight from the problem.[40]

[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 626–8.

[38] Hugenholtz, *Theol. Tijdschr.*, 1874, p. 415.

[39] L. H. Slotemaker, *Theol. Tijdschr.*, 1870, 'De ethische richting onder de modernen'.

[40] Rauwenhoff, *Theol. Tijdschr.*, 1877, 'De ethische richting', pp. 308–9, 314.

The discussion waxed and waned several times. In the end, the ethical theory made a very deep impression upon its opponents. Many modernists may be said to have been brought over from the intellectualism in which they had been trained, not indeed to the views of the ethicals, but to something much more like Hoekstra. This qualified view is thus expressed by Hugenholtz (and quoted later by van Bell):

> Religion is not in the first place a matter of the understanding but of the heart . . . a disposition of the mind, a direction of the life, which from the nature of the case immediately leaves its impress in a corresponding view of life and the world, and then is in turn supported by this, but in such a way, that never what is purely theoretical, but what is practically appreciative, has here the ascendancy.[41]

The same view of religion is put forth in an interesting form in Rauwenhoff's *Philosophy of Religion*.[42] In this work, we are far removed from the intellectualistic theology of the old-moderns. Religion is given an ethical,

[41] 'Godsdienst is niet in de eerste plaats een zaak des verstands maar des harten. . . . Godsdienst is gemoedsgesteldheid, levensrichting, die uit den aard der zaak zich onmiddellijk afdrukt in een dien overeenkomstige levens- en wereldbeschouwing, en dan ook weer door deze geschraagd wordt, doch alzoo, dat nooit het zuiver theoretische maar het practisch-waardeerende hier het overwicht heeft.' *Theol. Tijdschr.*, 1874, p. 423; 1875, p. 606.

[42] L. W. E. Rauwenhoff, *Wijsbegeerte van den godsdienst* (Leiden, 1887); German translation, *Religionsphilosophie* (Braunschweig, 1889).

not a philosophical foundation. But while religion begins thus, it does not end thus. It goes on to a view of the world. The ultimate source of religious faith is found by Rauwenhoff in the sense of unconditional duty. This sense of duty leads man to postulate a moral world-order. Rauwenhoff then proceeds, in search of support for this postulate, to examine nature, and finds there sufficient evidence of teleology to encourage religious faith. The moral world-order in itself is God. But the forms under which man represents to himself this outward reality are supplied by the poetizing fancy. The forms of this religious poetry evolve, until we come to the idea of God as Father. We place ourselves over against Him as over against a person, remembering the while that this is imagery. But the imagery, though poetic, is not deceptive, for a reality corresponds to the poetic *voorstelling*. In the main, this again is Hoekstra, save that the basis of the postulate is once more narrowed down to the sense of duty alone. Rauwenhoff is thus more Kantian than Hoekstra. But in his superstructure, he will hardly assert so much as either Hoekstra or Kant. All beyond the mere moral order is poetry. This is hardly a sturdy theism.

But to the question of theism we return in Chapter V. We must first pause to give a brief sketch of the outward career of Dutch modernism.

CHAPTER IV

MODERNISM IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

ALTHOUGH it is an episode in the history of theology with which we are dealing, rather than in the history of the church, it is necessary for the understanding of certain later phases of Dutch modernism that we give some indication of the career of this movement outside of books and schools. It is a fascinating story, and full of instruction. Unfortunately, however, one is likely to learn from it whatever he already believes to be true. Nothing is easier than for a defender of orthodoxy to find here his crowning illustration of the blighting effects of 'modern unbelief'. And the convinced liberal will find here confirmation of his belief that the spirit of orthodoxy is the curse of the church, or perhaps evidence that too democratic an organization of the church leads to the triumph of ignorance. The Dutch have discussed this question of modernism and church from many angles; but there remains much to be gained from a sympathetic, discerning, and unbiased study of what

happened in the Dutch churches, in answer to the question: What may a Christianity that must everywhere meet some form of 'modernism' learn from the career of this singularly bold attempt to modernize religion? But such a study is a separate task, and cannot be attempted here. We can only give a few important points of the story.

The young men who went forth from the instruction of Opzoomer and Scholten, entered their ministry with the glad confidence that they had a theology both surely true and at the same time in happy agreement with modern knowledge. They expected nothing but beneficent results from the substitution of this sound belief for the imperfect, traditional theology of their parishioners. They were not unaware of the delicacy of this work of substitution, and for a time caution prevailed. But presently began the work of popularizing the new views.

As an academic movement, Dutch modernism may be dated either from its first theological manifesto, Scholten's Franeker address, or from its more thorough working out in his *Leer der Hervormde Kerk;* but as a movement in the church, among the people, it is dated by Herderschee from the publication in 1858 of *Letters about the Bible*, by Conrad Busken Huet.[1] The author, a pastor, here

[1] C. Busken Huet, *Vragen en antwoorden; brieven over den bijbel* (Haarlem, 1858).

presents in popular form some of the Tübingen critical views of the New Testament,[2] under the guise of letters between a young girl and her brother, who has been doing some independent studying and answers her perplexities. The questions discussed are, God's 'speaking' to men in the Bible, the fulfilment of the Old Testament in the New, miracles (which are not categorically swept aside, but examined separately and disposed of in various ways), the composition of the Gospel story, a comparison of Acts with the Epistles, &c.

Other efforts for informing the public followed. Pamphlets were written explaining what the *moderne richting* stood for. In several cities courses of public lectures were given. Where this was not feasible, the pulpit had to be used for this purpose. There is no doubt that the work of destruction was in some instances done recklessly. But great as was the excitement and often the indignation which followed upon this proclamation of strange doctrine, in many quarters the new views were thankfully received. There was a considerable element among the laity, brought up under the old liberalism and having some knowledge of the modern world-view, who felt a distinct relief at having their religious beliefs harmonized with the rest of their

[2] Opzoomer had led his students to read Baur and Schwegler, and Schleiermacher as well, long before Scholten had accepted their critical views. Herderschee, *Modern-godsdienstige richting*, p. 98.

intellectual equipment. In any case, the new propaganda was interesting and exciting. The churches were thronged to hear the discussions. As a sample of what took place, Prof. Oort once told the writer how one year, as Easter drew near, he and several of his friends in the ministry agreed that this year the truth must be told. They would all tell what they really believed. He himself announced to his congregation that on Easter Sunday he would preach an edificatory sermon, but that on the following Sunday he would discuss the resurrection of Jesus critically. (His congregation must have been startled on the second Sunday.)

For a time the modernists had high hopes, not of converting the entire church to their views at once, but of seeing in their lifetime a commanding place gained for their principles. These hopes were speedily disappointed. The interest waned. It began to appear that some who had hailed the new views were interested only so long as the work was destructive. They had enjoyed seeing the old structure torn down, but in many cases only because this gave excuse to their own lack of seriousness. Every one who had chafed under the moral restraints of the old religion was glad to call himself 'modern', and presently with the old theology to discard all religion. Thus, when the modernists turned from the preliminary work of revising their people's beliefs, to the main task of fostering piety on the new basis, their

large audiences began to thin. After some years the modernists became the victims of such a wave of popular indifference and irreligion, that they were brought to a profound despondency.[3]

Beside this failure to prove a reviving force in the religious life of the people, the career of modernism was further troubled by defections from the ranks of its ministry (not to mention the violent opposition of orthodoxy). With the old supernaturalism gone, the question naturally arose: What shall we think of the church as an institution, and what can we make of it? To most, this was no difficulty. The church was, to be sure, not a Divine institution in the old sense, but a natural association of men for the cultivation of religion. But since the church did exist, the obvious thing to do, in spite of its unpleasant features, seemed to be to preserve it and use it. Its underlying idea must be modified, but it was the best possible instrument ready to hand. Some there were who would even have agreed to a Confession of Faith, provided it were one of the present, not a dead hand out of the past. Most of the moderns, however, hoped in time to rid the church of all genuinely ecclesiastical features, and make it a free

[3] In 1870 the moderns were discussing the question: What have we to do in order to bring our religious convictions to the people? But in 1877 the question raised was: Can the religion of the educated be also that of the people? Brouwer, *De moderne richting* (Nijmegen, 1904), p. 132.

association quite like any other.[4] But there were a few who could not rest content in the official ministry.

The first conspicuous defection was that of Busken Huet, the author of *Letters about the Bible*. In 1862 he resigned the pastorate of the Walloon church of Haarlem. For two years he continued to address a large audience on Sundays in a concert hall in Haarlem, and thereafter devoted himself to literary criticism and journalism.[5] His giving up of the ministry seems to have been due to a gradual shifting of his views in the direction of agnosticism.

More of a storm was raised in 1865 by the resignation of Allard Pierson,[6] joint pastor with A. Réville of the Walloon church of Rotterdam. Pierson found his position as pastor of a church unnatural and meaningless. As a modern religious man his duty was to, and his fellowship with, nothing less than all humanity. The only basis for the separation of a part of humanity into a church was a supernaturalistic view of religion. In his *Letter to my Last Church*[7] he explained all this. A controversy

[4] Herderschee, *op. cit.*, p. 136. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 151.

[6] Pierson's biographer used as a motto the lines from de Musset:

Je ne puis; malgré moi l'Infini me tourmente,
Je n'y saurais songer sans crainte et sans espoir;
Et quoiqu'on en ait dit, ma raison s'épouvante
De ne pas le comprendre et pourtant de le voir.

S. A. Naber, *Allard Pierson herdacht* (Haarlem, 1897).

[7] Pierson, *Brief aan mijn laatste gemeente* (Arnhem? 1865).

ensued with Réville, who was deeply grieved at what he considered Pierson's entirely unnecessary attitude.[8] Professor Kuenen also defended the right of the moderns to remain in the church.[9] It is only the Catholic Church, he said, which cannot change. Protestantism is not bound to its original supernaturalism, but may adopt new knowledge. Busken Huet now broke into the controversy with his pamphlet *Unasked Advice*,[10] in which he accused the moderns of dishonesty in remaining within a body whose fundamental principles they had rejected. Others beside these two found their position in the ministry impossible, and sought refuge in journalism or other work. Pierson became *Privatdozent* and later professor at Heidelberg, and later in Amsterdam taught modern literature, aesthetics, and history of art. But he still maintained his interest in theology, and produced works on the Bible and church history. These defections from the ministry were a shock to the modernists, and of course furnished magnificent ammunition for their enemies.

In the meantime strenous efforts were being made to oust them from the Dutch Reformed Church. In the smaller

[8] Cf. Réville's pamphlets, published in French and Dutch, *Nous maintiendrons* (Arnhem, 1865), and *Notre foi et notre droit* (Arnhem, 1866).

[9] Kuenen, *Het goed recht der modernen* (Leiden, 1866).

[10] C. Busken Huet, *Ongevraagd advies in de zaak van Pierson tegen Réville c. s.* (Haarlem, 1866).

Lutheran, Mennonite, and Remonstrant bodies the path of modernism was much easier. The Remonstrant Brotherhood, in fact, may be said to have become 'modern' as a body without a struggle. In the other two sects the moderns won for themselves at least toleration. In the Lutheran congregation at Leiden, for instance, of the two ministers one is orthodox and the other a modernist, and so a *modus vivendi* is found. But in the great historic *volkskerk*, with its large membership and its doctrinal standards (the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort), the case was different. To be sure, the formula of subscription now read so as to pledge allegiance only to the 'spirit and substance' (*geest en hoofdzaak*) of these standards; but while this vague formula enabled the moderns to remain in the church with a good conscience, it did not ward off attempts to oust them. This was usually tried by appeals to the Synod for more precise definitions of what is the 'spirit and substance' of the standards. Up to the present, however, this method has never produced any results. Thanks to a very imperfectly representative system of choosing members of the Synod, that body does not always act according to the wishes of the majority of church members.

But if action by the Synod could not be procured, much could be done in particular congregations, owing in large measure to the introduction of a more democratic

method of local church control, which the moderns themselves had worked hard to bring about. Each parish in the Dutch Reformed Church is governed by a *kerkeraad* (church council or consistory) consisting of ministers, elders, and deacons. These bodies had in most cases been self-perpetuating. But by a measure which went into effect on March 1, 1867, the right of voting for elders and deacons was given to all male members over twenty-three years of age, who were not under suspension and not 'on the parish'. By this measure, the consistories soon came to reflect in their personnel the theological opinions of the membership. The moderns, as friends of democracy along with other modern ideals, had been active in accomplishing this change; but it was a disaster for them. In all the large cities, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague, Groningen, Haarlem, Leiden, Utrecht, the consistory became strongly orthodox. Inasmuch as all the members in a given city form one parish (though worshipping in many churches), an orthodox consistory could, and did, fill each vacancy in the pastorate as it occurred with an orthodox man; so that soon very considerable minorities among the laity found themselves prevented from securing even one 'modern' preacher out of the ten or twenty serving the parish. This condition continues, in the cities mentioned, to this day. In many smaller places the case was not quite so hopeless.

Troubled times now came for the moderns. Theological

students became fewer, frightened at the prospect of a harassed career. More ministers grew sick of the strife, and left the Church. Some went over to the Remonstrants, taking a following with them. In some places, where no Remonstrant church existed, the seceders founded one. Far oftener, however, the modernists remained in the Reformed Church, and where they found themselves deprived of all rights, found their support in the *Protestantenbond* (*vide infra*). In Leiden, and later in other cities, they formed a Society of Liberal Reformed (*Vereeniging van Vrijzinnig-Hervormden*), supporting their own pastor by voluntary contributions, and meeting for worship in a hired hall, but retaining their membership and their right of voting in the Reformed Church; resolutely waiting for better days. The better days have not yet come.[11]

In a single instance a more radical step was taken. In 1877 the brothers Philip Reinhart and Petrus Hermannus Hugenholtz jr., ministers of the Reformed congregation of Amsterdam, left with a following and founded the Free Congregation (*De Vrije Gemeente*), which broke definitely with the 'Church' idea, and is just what its name suggests. It soon had a building of its own. P. H. Hugenholtz jr., the younger of the two brothers, was for many years its 'leader'. The Free Congregation holds a Sunday morning service of worship,

[11] Herderschee, *op. cit.*, pp. 164 *et seq.*

and during the week conducts an admirable, systematic school of religion. It has abandoned the sacraments, but has kept the custom of an address to parents after the birth of a child, and it solemnizes matrimony. The Hugenholtz brothers at first hoped that their example would be widely followed, and that the moderns would form 'free associations' as more consistent with their principles than 'the church'. But until very recently this was the only congregation of its kind in Holland.[12]

The *Protestantenbond*, a parallel to the German *Protestantenverein*, was organized to give needed support to groups of liberals. Its purpose was originally declared to be 'the maintenance and furtherance of evangelical freedom in the Protestant denominations'. The next year this was changed, and the league was defined as 'a society of those who wish to co-operate in order to further the free development of the religious life, both within and without the circle of the ecclesiastical bodies'.[13] This league maintains Sunday Schools,

[12] A few years ago, a free congregation was formed in the Hague, under the leadership of a former Remonstrant minister, who advocates a religion 'loose from Christianity'. I am not sure whether this movement should be considered a part of the *moderne richting*, though its leader has addressed the Free Congregation of Amsterdam in 1923.

[13] '... de handhaving en bevordering der evangelische vrijheid in de Protestantsche kerkgenootschappen'; 'eene vereeniging van hen, die willen samenwerken om de vrije ontwikkeling van het

supplies preachers and teachers for small groups of liberals, has issued a collection of hymns, and in some local branches has undertaken social service. For long it had a special commission for the interests of liberals in the Reformed Church, where the difficulties were greatest. But between 1903 and 1909 there grew up a separate organization of these, named, like the first society in Leiden, the *Vereeniging van Vrijzinnig-Hervormden*, and in 1910 the special commission of the *Protestantenbond* ceased to exist.

A prominent feature of the modernist movement has been the annual meeting of 'modern theologians', at which a great variety of subjects of interest to the movement are discussed. The first of these meetings was held in April, 1866.[14]

Two points in the foregoing sketch are of importance for our study. They are, the astonishing enthusiasm and courage with which the first generation of 'modern' preachers set out to propagate their revolutionary revision of Christianity; and the ensuing disappointment at the failure of the new doctrine to break the might of orthodoxy, and more especially at its failure to prove a spiritual power among those of the laity who at first

godsdienstig leven te bevorderen, zoo binnen den kring der kerkgenootschappen als daarbuiten'. Herderschee, *op. cit.*, p. 293 *et seq.*

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 290. The Dutch word *theoloog* is applied to ministers and theological students as well as 'theologians' in the English sense.

hailed it with joy. As this disappointment grew, some began to ask themselves, Was our first work too largely negative? Did we destroy too hastily? Have we misunderstood the religious needs of the common man? Can it be that we have overlooked some essential element of religion? Most of the moderns, indeed, felt that they had been compelled by loyalty to the truth to preach just as they had done. But one significant tendency of later years is largely explained by this sense of something amiss in 'old-modernism'—viz. the group of 'malcontents'.

CHAPTER V

LATER TENDENCIES

In this chapter we gather together a variety of tendencies exhibited in Dutch modernism since the 'ethical' controversy. It is necessarily somewhat of a miscellany of things unrelated and of unequal importance.

1. *The Question of Theism.*

In general it may be said that the 'modern' theology, save for the episode of the 'ethical' controversy, was and is theistic. After that controversy was over, an occasional voice was still raised against insistence on a clearly defined theism, e. g. in 1892 in the weekly *De Hervorming* (The Reformation); nevertheless 'religion without gods' has long been a dead issue in Holland. Perhaps the most striking feature of this renewed theistic emphasis was the complete change of position of Professor Bruining. The same man who in 1877 had argued that gods are only imaginary fulfillers of ideals, and that religion has no necessary connexion with theories about the universe, was insisting eight years later on the primacy of belief:

> In one word, over against the fundamental thesis of Dr. Hugenholtz, 'Religious belief rests on the sense of duty, arose out of it, and finds in it as time goes on its firm foundation', I put the hypothesis that, on the contrary,

the sense of duty rests on religious belief, is by it first called into life, and also is continuously dependent upon it.[1]

In 1891 he published a little popular work on *The Existence of God*,[2] in which he refutes naturalism, ascribes moral evil to the power of self-determination in man, and argues that moral obligation is meaningless except on a theistic basis. And in an article[3] directed against the 'malcontents', he declared that the whole modern tendency to ground theology in man's moral nature or man's needs, flows from that departure from rationalism which can be traced through Kant, Schleiermacher, and Feuerbach (with his theory of religion as springing from wishes). Bruining would go back of this whole development, to the rationalistic position once more, only by a deeper investigation of the world to arrive at a better theology than the barren old-rationalistic scheme of Creator, virtue, rewards and punishments. The nineteenth-century idea that religion springs from the need of redemption, Bruining thinks is not so much a discovery as an invention.[4] This return of Bruining to the method

[1] A. Bruining, *Moderne mystiek, Een verweerschrift* (Leiden, 1885), p. 49.

[2] A. Bruining, *Het bestaan van God, Een populaire beschouwing* (Leiden, 1891). He deals with the problem of evil in a work which I have not seen, *Het geloof aan God en het kwaad in de wereld* (Baarn, 1907).

[3] Bruining, *Teyler's Theol. Tijdschrift*, 1910, pp. 1-23, 214-48.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

of basing theism on the observed facts of the world is a return to Scholten. But Bruining's fellow-moderns could not follow him whole-heartedly in this. They were glad to share his firm belief in God, but the day was past when they could so confidently base their faith upon an intellectual argument.[5]

P. H. Hugenholtz jr., leader of the Free Congregation of Amsterdam, in 1903 set forth his views in a book called *Ethical Pantheism*.[6] In this he draws much upon Paulsen's *Einleitung in die Philosophie*. He says his system might as well be called panentheism, but he has no desire to avoid the word pantheism. He does not identify God and nature, but leaves a place for teleology, not indeed like that of a builder following a preconceived plan, but like that of a speaker composing his speech 'on his feet'.[7] Personal immortality is rejected.[8] The author aims to draw more on our Aryan religious inheritance, and less exclusively upon the Jewish. He rejoices to find in Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* a confirmation of his own belief that the best religious feeling is found among the Aryans.[9]

Professor H. Oort, perhaps the only survivor of the

[5] Roessingh, *Modernisme in Nederland*, p. 159.

[6] P. H. Hugenholtz jr., *Ethisch pantheisme, Een studie* (Amsterdam, 1903).

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 238. [8] *Ibid.*, p. 250 *et seq.* [9] *Ibid.*, p. 179.

ethical group, now holds a position closer to ordinary theism. In preaching, he uses the expression 'God the Creator', in the sense that in dealing with the external world we are dealing with the activity of God. But in conversation with the writer he once outlined his tentative position about as follows: The ethicals erred in trying to distinguish sharply between nature and the moral world. The two are parts of one system of things. Of the origin of the world we know nothing; but in the existing world, both in nature and in man's spiritual life, the Spirit of God is operative.

We may say, then, that Dutch modernism came out of its 'ethical' controversy with theism conserved as a permanent possession.[10] There is a general agreement that a religion without theism would not be religion, and should go by some other name.

2. *Views of Christ.*

Views of Christ among Moderns[11] is the title of a composite work which gives an illuminating insight into

[10] In the *Theol. Tijdschr.* for 1902, pp. 97–113, H. G. Brink, a pastor, urged the adoption of von Hartmann's adoration of an all-inclusive, impersonal God-spirit, as a valid metaphysic and a better religious view than theism. But this may be regarded as a vagary.

[11] *Christusbeschouwingen onder modernen*, door Dr. G. A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, Prof. Dr. A. Bruining, J. A. Bruins jr., P. H. Hugenholtz jr., Dr. C. J. Niemeyer, A. W. van Wijk (Baarn, not dated, probably 1908).

current modernist theology. We shall summarize some of these views.

Professor Bruining says: Jesus was a *man*. He is not an authority for our faith. It is true we need support from the faith of others; but Jesus did not live in our world, and therefore his faith can help us but little, just as the faith of a Catholic or an orthodox Protestant can help us little. The heroic, suffering, self-forgetting Jesus is a figure put into the record by modern imagination, an ideal figure, formed by a very free use of *part* of the New Testament data, plus imaginative additions, e.g. concerning his religious development. The real work of Jesus was this:

> He wrought in his environment a spiritual awakening. . . . His word and life prepared people who came in contact with him, and enabled them to understand more clearly what God was speaking to and in them. . . . At the beginning of that movement stands then the prophet of Nazareth. . . . He was the chosen instrument, through whom God made a new beginning in His spiritual creation. But the movement taken as a whole is not *his* work; it is the result of this, that God continuously, each time anew, spoke and speaks in human souls.[12]

Hugenholtz says that every age makes its peculiar Christ-picture.

> So the Christ-picture takes the first and highest place among the heroes and prophets of humanity. All of them are for us leaders and guides, but none of them is indis-

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 39–41.

> pensable. God alone is indispensable. . . . When the mediators and guides at last make way for the inward God, for the holy spirit that dwells in the hearts, when one has learned to adore God, and to serve him only, then there sounds through the soul the deeply reverent, all-surmounting ground-tone of the religious life: SOLI DEO GLORIA.[13]

Van Wijk holds that, irrespective of historical questions (though he believes in an historical Jesus), the Jesus-figure is to us a revelation from God, a moral power given by God; i.e. the character of Jesus is such, not the old dogmas about his person and work. There is an admitted loss in this. The modernist doctrine of Christ can never be popular. It lacks compelling authority. We cannot offer the attraction of a systematic, established belief, shared by a large, strong fellowship. And we lack also the stimulus of fear of an angry God. Instead we have 'the unconditional love of God, not to be cooled or made wrathful by anything, not even by any sin'—a doctrine which leads many to indifference. But so much the more have we to offer to those who know the thirst for truth and inward peace. 'We have understood the voice of the Almighty, who calls to us that we best grasp the truth of His intention with men, when we bring Him close to us by seeing Him with the face of Jesus Christ.'[14]

Niemeyer holds that we may call Jesus 'Christ' (though both Jesus and we have something else in mind

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 124–31. [14] *Ibid.*, pp. 124–31.

than Jewish Messianic expectations) because we believe in the triumph of God according to Jesus' principles. And we do not lose sight of the person in favour of the principles, for the character of Jesus encourages our faith in humanity amid much that is base. Association with Jesus raises us above the common standards of the world. From Jesus also we gain faith in God. What he says about God is important (though not binding), just because he says it. If we knew that our Jesus-figure were only an ideal, then it could exert only such power as ideals exert. His personal influence is possible only if we believe him to be historical. This, then, is dependent upon the outcome of historical investigation. But not our religious life. 'The significance which the *person* of Jesus has for the religious life, is in the last analysis no more, nor may it ever be more, than a subsidiary one. . . . The chief thing is, that the heart come to the Father and cling to Him.' [15]

G. A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, who contributes an essay to this volume, stands alone, so far as I know, among the Dutch theologians in a view which deserves a separate section of this chapter.

3. *Revived Hegelianism and the Christ-Myth.*

Doubts as to the historical existence of Jesus had appeared in Holland before the revival of Hegelianism.

[15] *Ibid.*, pp., 179, 181.

Between the theories of Bruno Bauer and the Christ-myth theories of the present day, an intermediate stage is formed by the criticism of Allard Pierson and of Loman. Pierson began by judging that the Sermon on the Mount [16] bore no signs of being the original composition of a single person. In his joint work with Naber, the *Verisimilia*,[17] he regarded Christianity as a free religious movement within Judaism, in which the conviction arose that the Messiah had appeared. A. D. Loman, professor in the Lutheran seminary at Amsterdam, had admitted as early as 1870 that we know little about the historical Jesus. In 1880, in an article in *De Gids*,[18] he emphasized this further. The modern representation of the historical Jesus is just as much an imaginary construction as is the mythological Christ of tradition. Christianity is founded upon Jesus *Christ* (historical tradition plus idealization). But in the following year, in an address before the Free Congregation,[19] he gave up the historicity of Jesus, and made him to be the ideal son or representative of the Jewish

[16] A. Pierson, *De bergrede en andere synoptische fragmenten* (Amsterdam, 1878).

[17] *Verisimilia. Laceram conditionem Novi Testamenti exemplis illustrarunt et ab origine repetierunt A. Pierson et S. A. Naber* (Amsterdam and the Hague, 1886).

[18] A. D. Loman, *De Gids*, 1880, vol. ii, 'Antiek en modern Christendom'.

[19] A. D. Loman, *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente*, 1883, 'Het oudste Christendom'.

nation. This sort of view, as Schweitzer points out,[20] should be called symbolic rather than mythical. The mythical theory derives Christ, not from new ideas current in the first century, but from the still more ancient mythologies of the day. Loman later again held, with van Manen, that the earliest gospel records might contain some historical materials.[21]

But these radical views had never been widely current among the moderns. Nor was the later Hegelian-mythical theory any more popular.

G. A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, now a pastor at Santpoort, near Haarlem, was a disciple of the Leiden philosopher, the late Professor G. J. P. J. Bolland. This thinker was a mighty exponent of Hegelianism, and incidentally developed a theory of the origin of Christianity, according to which the 'historicizing' of the god of the cult into the figure of Jesus of Nazareth took place deliberately in Alexandria.[22] Van den Bergh van Eysinga himself has made extensive researches in support of the mythical theory.[23] But, once rid of the historical Jesus, who looms so large in much modernist preaching, he is able to preach with the more enthusiasm

[20] A. Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung. Zweite, neu bearbeitete und vermehrte Auflage des Werkes 'Von Reimarus zu Wrede'* (Tübingen, 1913), p. 448.

[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 496–7. [22] *Ibid.*, pp. 496–7.

[23] Cf. G. A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, *Voorchristelijk Christendom: de voorbereiding van het Evangelie in de Hellenistische wereld* (Zeist, 1918).

the Christ of dogma, finding in the traditional theological language a figurative expression of Bolland's Hegelianism. Thus he is doing what Strauss intended to do in his *Leben Jesu*—disposing of the historical Jesus in order that the traditional Christology and Trinitarian dogma may the more freely be interpreted in Hegelian terms. In the book *Views of Christ*, he says: 'The Christian doctrine is a parable, in which the being of God and of the world and of the mutual relation of both is presented in a way comprehensible to the common people.'[24] One cannot help wondering what his congregation make of it, for the traditional language must often pass over into puzzling statements. His fellow moderns have sometimes raised just this question about his method.

4. *The Malcontents or Right-Wing Moderns.*

We come now to a movement which, while not large, is theologically significant and interesting, constituting as it does a reaction from some of the most characteristic 'modern' positions. It is traceable to several influences: to the disappointment with the results of modernism in the churches, as indicated above; to the study of other and deeper types of philosophy than that which had moulded the first modernists; to a change in the general mental climate throughout Europe; in the case of some persons, to the influence of the Leiden professor of the

[24] *Christusbeschouwingen*, p. 241.

History of Religions, the younger Chantepie de la Saussaye, himself not a modernist but belonging to the ethical-orthodox school.[25] Strongest of all these influences was doubtless the first, the feeling that modernism had overlooked some essential element in religion, and particularly in Christianity. The reaction shows a renewed emphasis upon salvation from sin ; upon what is specifically Christian as opposed to the generally religious (the older modernism, with the rejection of the supernatural uniqueness of Christianity, had looked rather in the other direction) ;[26] and even, in a sense, less hostility to the idea of the supernatural. This group have been called at various times 'young moderns', 'malcontents', and, more recently, 'moderns of the right' (*rechtsmodernen*).

In the opening years of the twentieth century there appeared among some of the younger moderns a preference for the more general name 'liberal' (*vrijzinnig*), partly because they did not feel themselves entirely in harmony with the older moderns, and partly because in the ears of many earnest people the word 'modern' had come to have the connotation of 'irreligious'.[27]

[25] See Chapter III, note 1.

[26] In a review in the *Theol. Tijdschr.*, 1880, Ph. R. Hugenholtz had complained of Cannegieter, Biedermann, Lipsius, and Pfleiderer, that they insisted on writing a 'Christian' theology, thereby confusing the historical and the perfect.

[27] Cf. *De Hervorming*, 1908, Nos. 48 and 49.

But the first real manifesto of 'malcontentism' was a pair of articles by Professor B. D. Eerdmans, under the pseudonym Agnotos, entitled 'Reaction or Progress?'[28] Eerdmans definitely attacks the old-modern view of religion, of sin, of man. The failure of modernism to become a great religious power has brought men face to face with the alternative: either religion is a great mistake, something that belongs to former times and has nothing to say to us; or else we have not understood religion. The latter is the fact. Rauwenhoff, in making religion to consist in faith in a moral world-order, and Tiele, in defining it as adoration which seeks union with its god, have read into the history of religion what was in their own hearts, often in spite of what the phenomena indicated. But, on the contrary, the essence of religion has always been *soteriology*. The malcontents, therefore, in restoring the emphasis upon salvation, are scientifically justified. This emphasis they restore because they have recovered the sense of the reality of sin. The old-moderns had great faith in the natural nobility of man, and thought that once the artificial bonds of orthodox dogma were loosed, evolution would do the rest. But Eerdmans does not observe that the emancipated moderns are conspicuously nobler than the orthodox; and he suspects

[28] *Theol. Tijdschr.*, 1909, pp. 1–16, 146–80, 'Reactie of vooruitgang?' The pseudonym over the first article was Ignotus, changed in the second to Agnotos.

that the doctrine of evolution may be a delusion. No, sin is a reality, a power, from which man needs redemption. But a doctrine of redemption can be nothing else than a return to Christology. Precisely here the malcontents meet the sharpest criticism from the old-moderns. A real Christology, say the old-moderns, is no longer possible, for historical criticism has definitely shown that Jesus was a human teacher, not the Divine Saviour of traditional Christianity. Jesus can therefore be at most our leader. Eerdmans objects to this lofty attitude. There has never been such a thing as unprejudiced criticism. It is not historical criticism (as such) that has yielded the above result, but only a particular historical criticism.[29] Eerdmans does not mean that he once more believes in the miraculous Saviour of tradition.

> I will not neglect to say that I do not believe in the supernatural birth of Jesus, in his resurrection and ascension, but . . . historical criticism has nothing to do with that. Even if all the records were in the best harmony and everything fitted together excellently, that would not bring me a step nearer to belief in these miracles.[30]

But since it is not impartial criticism that prevents him from believing in them, neither can criticism be invoked to forbid the malcontents to make Jesus a Saviour. The early Christians clothed their experience of Jesus' saving

[29] Not *de historische kritiek* but only *historische kritiek*.
[30] *Loc. cit.*, pp. 171–2.

power in the thought of their day, in Jewish ideas of ritual reconciliation, current philosophy, ideas from the mystery cults. But we too are sinners, and need light and redemption.

> Even as the men before us, we find this in Jesus, who is therefore for us the Christ. He makes us, men of this age, see another life-reality, us as well as the people who saw the outer world so entirely differently from us, because the human soul has remained the same. He shows us the reality of life in God. In him there comes to us a life that was full of God, in which the power of evil was broken. By entering into his spirit, our life is placed upon another foundation, it comes into another sign, the sign of God.[31]

We need something more than the revelation *in us*. This something more we find by entering into the spirit of the Jesus of the gospels, 'who until now has set all historical criticism more riddles than it was able to answer, but who, notwithstanding all criticism, continues to speak through the gospels to the hearts of men'.[32] Early modernism was a first attempt, and suffered from inadequate knowledge of the history of religion and a too hasty trust in the doctrine of evolution. What seems to older men reaction, therefore, is really progress.

Professor K. H. Roessingh, in a pamphlet called *Modernism of the Right*,[33] agrees quite closely with Eerdmans. He speaks first of all of the significance of

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 178–9. [32] *Ibid.*, p. 180.
[33] K. H. Roessingh, *Rechtsmodernisme* (Haarlem, 1918).

the newer modernism in the life of the time. A change has come over the world. Aesthetic feelings are different. Individualism has given way to a new sense of fellowship. We no longer expect such great boons from natural science. A new philosophical activity has replaced the old agnosticism.

> The words which sounded pleasantly in the ears of the previous generation, realism, mechanism, naturalism, utilitarianism, intellectualism, have become strange to us; we seek other methods, we desire other results. . . . We feel ourselves a little in reaction against the second half of the nineteenth century, 'the coldest and barrenest time that church, theology, the science of religion, and philosophy have experienced in the last centuries, the frost and weariness of which, even to-day when it is gradually beginning to yield, still lies in our members'.[34]

This new situation in the world the right-wing moderns meet not with religion in general, but with an appeal to the specifically Christian. Orthodoxy, unacceptable as it is, nevertheless shows a deep insight into the mysterious, tragic moments of life, and something of this insight must be recovered. Secondly, as to its religious characteristics, right-wing modernism bases once more on the antithesis

[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 199–200. The quotation is from Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. ii (Tübingen, 1913), p. 2: 'Die kälteste und ödeste Zeit, die Kirche, Theologie, Religionswissenschaft und Philosophie in den letzten Jahrhunderten erlebt haben, deren Frost und Ermattung uns heute noch, wo sie allmählich zu weichen beginnt, in den Gliedern liegt.'

of sin and grace. 'God the Father' is the father of the parable of the Prodigal Son, not the happy father of an untroubled family. Thirdly, theologically, right-wing modernism tends to rest content in a dualism (sin and grace, man and God). It is less confidently anti-supernaturalistic. Not that it does not take a critical attitude toward the miracle stories of the Bible, but it is less dogmatic about the absolute, unbroken continuity of all phenomena in one system of cause and effect. And it is Christocentric. This may mean many things, but in general it means that Christ is the central revelation of God, and becomes a power in human life, and so is the Redeemer. In the case of Roessingh himself, this does not wait upon what criticism may finally say about the historical Jesus. For him it is the New Testament picture of Christ which is the revelation and the saving power.

The articles of Professor Eerdmans had sounded very much like accusing the old-moderns of shallowness. And even without this it came with something of a shock to find men, brought up in the full light of modernism, once more using language that suggested an unaccountable reversion to orthodoxy. It is not surprising, therefore, that strong objection was made. A writer in *De Hervorming* declared that the whole movement was nothing but a revival of pietism.[35] A strong opponent

[35] *De Hervorming*, 1908, No. 49.

of the whole tendency was Professor Bruining, who made a detailed reply to Eerdmans.[36] He denies that religion has always been soteriological. Animism is concerned with escape from ills; but as soon as the gods become more exalted, other religious feelings appear. The earliest Christianity, it is true, attracted people who desired redemption from an evil world; but when Christianity became the prevailing religion, and so the current form for the expression of all religious experiences, it was otherwise. The mass, of course, remained on the lower level, and used Christianity as a means of escape from evils here and hereafter; but more developed Christians looked forward to heaven as a place of full communion with God, or rejoiced here and now in the discernment of God's presence. It is no progress, therefore, to insist that religion must be concerned with escape from evils. He resents the implication that the old-moderns did not feel the seriousness of sin. This does not follow from the fact that they fitted the fact of sin into an evolutionary monism. Eerdmans offers nothing different in the place of what he criticizes. For his 'Christ the Redeemer' appears to be nothing else than the Jesus of the old-moderns. His 'redemption' means nothing else than the conquest of sin. It comes to this, that Eerdmans wishes to *call* this admitted work

[36] Bruining, *Teyler's Theol. Tijdschr.*, 1910, pp. 1–23, 214–48, 'Godsdienst en verlossingsbehoefte'.

of God through Christ by the name of 'redemption' (*verlossing*). But Bruining finds a deeper malady at the root of all this. Malcontentism springs from Neo-Kantianism, which makes religious faith the product of inner needs, without objective verifiability. But Bruining insists that knowledge of the reality behind the world can be reached only by philosophical reflection on the basis of the data of scientific investigation, if at all. He who refuses to submit his idea of God to philosophical reflection, thereby admits that his God is not a supersensible Being, but a poetic figure. What it comes to, then, is that this talk of religion's springing from need of redemption is at bottom a species of unbelief.

Bruining considered malcontentism a danger to liberal religion, (*a*) because the emphasis on older forms of piety may lead some to think that they *ought* so to feel, and to suggest to themselves what they do not feel in reality; and (*b*) because many men of to-day, in the absence of such feelings, will be confirmed in their belief that they are through with religion. The phenomenon, he thought, was due to a relaxation of the sense for antisupernaturalism, and of this the renewed emphasis on Christ was only an illustration.[37]

Right-wing modernism, though not an extensive movement, is thus theologically important, as presenting the

[37] Bruining, *Nieuw Theol. Tijdschr.*, 1918, 'De kentering in het modernisme'.

uncommon phenomenon of the recovery, within a pronouncedly Unitarian group, of the 'evangelical' type of piety.

5. *Other Interests.*

Of late years other than purely theological interests have come into prominence. As in other lands, there has been an awakening to the religious significance of the social problem. (This is true to some extent in orthodox as well as liberal circles.) A group of some thirty young moderns who are avowed socialists have published since 1902 a paper called *De Blijde Wereld* (The Glad World). In 1920 appeared another small paper, *De Vrije Communist*, the organ of a group calling themselves the *Bond van Religieuze Anarcho-Communisten*. But, while these types are the extreme, a more moderate social interest is very widespread. The Remonstrant Brotherhood, so happily free from theological strife, is said to be entering more troubled waters over the social question.

A source from which great things are hoped for the future of liberal religion, is the spontaneous religious movement among the young people. Corresponding to the more orthodox student Christian association, the *Nederlandsche Christelijke Studenten Vereeniging*, with its 850 members, there is a liberal organization, the *Vrijzinnig Christelijke Studenten Bond*, with some 700. A wider young people's organization, outside of student

circles, has also come into being. And all this is a spontaneous movement of the young people, not initiated by pastors or teachers. It is rejoicing the hearts of liberal leaders. Something like a fresh breeze is blowing through Dutch modernism, and great things are possible.[38]

[38] I believe these movements in Holland have no direct connexion with the German *Jugendbewegung*. Their connexions are rather with the Y.M.C.A. and the International Student Christian Association.

CHAPTER VI

PARALLELS AND CONTRASTS

DUTCH modernism was of course not the only movement of its kind, but has its parallels in other lands; and it both received and exerted an influence from and upon the theology of these other lands.

'Like the red thread that is woven through the cordage of the English navy, so through the whole history of the modern school in Holland runs *anti-supernaturalism*.'[1] The rejection of the supernatural has of course a long history. In the German *Aufklärung*, in English deism, in Spinoza, Goethe, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Strauss, and Baur, it is explicit. But we have seen that the influences just named, especially the last ones, reached Holland late. It was not from German idealism that Holland first took its anti-supernaturalism, but, through Opzoomer, from that scientific realism which succeeded it, from that spirit which thought to find all truth by the methods of observation and experiment. This scientific realism was what Opzoomer gave his students as 'the modern view of the world'.

Meantime Scholten was teaching a 'modern' theology which goes back, through two indirect channels, to

[1] Herderschee, *op. cit.*, p. 386.

Schleiermacher. The first of these channels through which Schleiermacher's influence reached Scholten, was the Groningen school. From them he learned to think of Jesus as the archetypal, human son of God, into whose likeness mankind is destined to grow. But more directly, Schleiermacher's influence came to him through the great master's disciple, Schweizer. From Schleiermacher, Schweizer had learned to base theology on the historic Christian (particularly Protestant) consciousness; but for his doctrine of God he went back to Calvinism, with the modification of the doctrine of the decrees into the doctrine of the ultimate salvation of all men.[2] All this we find again in Scholten, but now with such an emphasis on the place of *reason* in religion as to give quite another accent than Schleiermacher's.

Through Schweizer, Scholten was further confirmed in that Schleiermacherian view of Christ to which the Groningers had already led him. Before 1860 at least, Christ is to Scholten the central element in Christianity and in God's purpose for the world, in virtue of his ideal, typical humanity. Christ himself is here still the indispensable instrument of salvation. This is the Christology not only of Schleiermacher and Schweizer, but of Biedermann and Lipsius.[3] But the Dutch modernists generally have belonged rather, like Scholten in his later

[2] Cf. Pfleiderer, *Development of theology*, pp. 125–30.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 142–3, 201–2.

period, to that more advanced type of liberalism for which Jesus is simply and solely the teacher and example of the purest form of religion, and where no other titles, such as Redeemer or Saviour, are applied to him. This attitude is found in men like Schmiedel,[4] and in the main stream of present-day Unitarianism.

As time went on, Scholten shows more completely the influence of all the great German masters, Lessing, Herder, and to some extent Hegel. By 1875 he could speak sympathetically of Spinoza: 'Even the denial of God's personality, to which we for our part hold fast, need not prevent the otherwise religious man from calling this Highest, with Spinoza, God.'[5]

If we think of the outward, ecclesiastical side of Dutch modernism, we must not look to Germany for analogies, but rather to Switzerland. There, in the 'Reform-movement' which is associated with the names of Biedermann and Heinrich Lang, we find the same bold popularizing of anti-supernaturalism in periodicals and sermons.[6] Theologically, the Swiss movement bore more of the Hegelian stamp than the Dutch.

French liberal Protestantism was, in the person of one of its representatives, for long an actual part of the

[4] Cf. his article in '*Jesus or Christ?*' (*Hibbert Journal Supplement*, 1909).

[5] Quoted in Roessingh, *Moderne theologie*, p. 131, note 1.

[6] Cf. A. E. Biedermann, *Heinrich Lang* (Zürich, 1876).

Dutch movement. Albert Réville was for over twenty years (1851–72) pastor of the Walloon church of Rotterdam. The theology presented by his son, Jean Réville, in his lectures delivered in Switzerland,[7] is in general accord with Dutch modernism.

To one familiar with English or American Christianity, it is natural to classify the Dutch moderns as Unitarians. In general, this is correct, though the two terms, Unitarianism and Modernism, do not cover quite the same ground. Older forms of Unitarianism were often in no sense 'modern'. The denial of the doctrine of the Trinity did not involve the denial of the miraculous or supernatural. But among English and American bodies, the Unitarians found it easiest to adopt modernistic views. And of course any theology which, like the one we have been describing, set out to dispense with the supernatural, could hardly arrive at anything but a Unitarian view of Jesus. Hence it comes about that the Dutch moderns have been enthusiastic members of the International Council of Unitarian and Other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers (later known as the International Congress of Free Christians and Other Religious Liberals).

Channing, who to be sure is not typical of present-

[7] J. Réville, *Le protestantisme libéral, ses origines, sa nature, sa mission* (Paris, 1903); English Tr., *Liberal Christianity*, &c. (New York, 1903).

day Unitarianism, corresponds rather to the Groningen school. In later years the 'Evangelicals' (the descendants of the Groningen school, a few of whom continue to this day) read Channing in translation with keenest appreciation, as a late-discovered ally. Especially in his revolt against the grim aspects of orthodoxy (total depravity, eternal punishment, the wrath of God, &c.) they found an echo of their own sentiments.[8]

But among Unitarian leaders the one most completely in accord with Dutch 'old-modernism' is Theodore Parker. His theology consisting of pure theism with faith in immortality, his abandonment of the miraculous, his independence even of Jesus (combined with a profound reverence for him)—all this found appreciation among the Dutch moderns, among whom his writings were well known. Next to Parker, another Unitarian leader of a similar type was Martineau, who also came to dispense with the miraculous. Present-day Unitarianism, except in its more conservative survivals, is enthusiastically modernistic. In England Unitarianism received a direct influence from the Dutch movement through the personal contact of P. H. Wicksteed with men like Kuenen and Oort.

[8] See *Religion and liberty. Addresses and papers at the Second International Council of Unitarian and Other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers, held in Amsterdam, September, 1903.* (Leiden, 1904).

The expression 'religion without metaphysics' (see Chapter III) may have led some readers to think of Ritschl. But how great is the contrast between Ritschl and the Dutch 'ethicals', for all Ritschl's hostility to 'natural theology' and 'metaphysics'. Instead of a clinging to the historical Jesus, as one who gives what philosophy refuses, we have in Holland a dispensing with theism and a reduction of religion to moral idealism, which within organized religion is paralleled only in the Ethical Societies.

The *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* in Germany owes much to the Dutch moderns. It issues out of that enlarged knowledge of the non-Christian religions, into which the Germans were first led by Tiele and the younger Chantepie de la Saussaye.[9] The latter did not belong to the modernist school in theology, but the impulse that led his predecessor, Tiele, into this field of study came undoubtedly from the modernist view of the equal naturalness of all religions. This new knowledge, increased by the researches of Germans themselves imbued with the 'modern' view of religion, has led to the fresh and fruitful approach to Christianity seen in a man like Ernst Troeltsch.

As a last word, one general remark can be made about Dutch modernism to-day. We have seen what varied

[9] *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Bd. iv, column 2192.

aspects the movement has begun to wear in recent years. To-day Dutch modernism gives the impression of *waiting* for some great new creative idea. The days of its first confident system-building are long past. The imposing theology of Scholten and Opzoomer is in ruins, nor has Hoekstra succeeded to their place. To-day one can find parts of theologies, but no one theology. Some reach a theism by rational argument, some by a postulate or act of faith, some by an intuition. There continues to be a boundary between all the moderns and the orthodox (though between right-wing moderns and left-wing ethical-orthodox [10] the line is a bit vague). But no modernist produces a *dogmatiek*. Some feel that on a 'modern' basis, with authority gone, no generally acceptable system of dogmatics can be written. And yet, if some new Schleiermacher should arise, to set all religious thought once again on a new foundation, who knows whether the Dutch modernists may not yet enjoy a renaissance of systematic theology?

[10] Cf. Chapter III, note 1.

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NOTE. A few works referred to in the foot-notes are omitted from this bibliography because not seen by the writer.